

Jordan to send relief to Afghanistan

AMMAN (Petra) — Upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein, Jordan will send in the coming few days relief supplies to the Afghanistani people who suffered from hard hitting earthquakes. These supplies will include blankets, tents, foodstuff and medicine.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Volume 23 Number 6765

AMMAN MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1998. SHAWWAL 19, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

Iraq invites the U.S. for 'no-conditions' dialogue

Rapprochement between Syria and Iraq is occurring on solid grounds — Sahhaf

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Iraq on Sunday said it was ready for direct talks with the U.S. without any conditions to settle all the differences between the two foes.

"We call for a political dialogue between Iraq and the United States of America," Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf said on Sunday.

"This is the proper channel to solve any binding crisis, problem or issue between the two countries."

"A healthy political dialogue should be used with no conditions. Iraq used to have good trade, economic and political relations with the United States of Amer-

ica and we strongly believe that a political dialogue is the way to remove any obstacles to normal bilateral relations," Mr. Sahhaf told the Jordan Times in an interview yesterday at the Guest Palace in Jabal Amman.

The Iraqi official, who arrived here on Thursday and expected to leave today (Monday) for Beirut on his fourth leg of a regional tour that took him to Syria, Egypt and Jordan, said that his country did not call on any party to mediate with the U.S.

Asked whether a dialogue is the best means to end the crisis between his country and the U.S., Mr. Sahhaf said: "Yes this is the way. And it depends on the American reaction."

Mr. Sahhaf said that the speaker of Iraq's National Council, Sa'doun Hammadi, has sent a message to his U.S. counterpart, Newt Gingrich, through Iraq's envoy to the United Nations Nizar Hamdoun offering to start talks between the two countries.

"Mr. Hammadi invited a delegation from the Congress to come to Baghdad for talks between the two parliaments," Mr. Sahhaf said.

But "they refused and I do not know why. But I think accepting an invitation while we are in this crisis will be a positive step," he added.

"Therefore, I hope that they rethink this offer and send a delegation to Baghdad to see the facts as they

are," the Iraqi official said.

Commenting on Russian and French efforts to peacefully resolve the deadlock over the U.N. inspection activities in Iraq, the minister said that the Russians proposed a "special team" that would be granted free access to all presidential palaces for a period of two months.

"The Russian initiative proposes that the U.N. secretary general establishes a special team of experts composed of equal numbers from the five permanent members of the Security Council and an equal number of experts from the members of the Special Commission," he said.

(Continued on page 7)

U.N. starts to map sites as calls mount for Saddam to back down

Annan expected in Baghdad Wednesday — deputy

Combined agency dispatches

ACCORDING TO MP Khalil Hadadin, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan may visit Baghdad on Wednesday on a mission to mediate a diplomatic end to the crisis over weapons inspections, Iraq's foreign minister told MPs on Sunday.

"Kofi Annan has given three experts a mandate to survey some sites, in preparation for his visit to Iraq which could take place on Wednesday," Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf said.

Mr. Annan could "bring" concessions from the Iraqi authorities if certain conditions were met, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said Sunday.

The conditions were that Iraq should not block inspection of contested sites and that Mr. Annan have a sufficiently wide mandate from the five permanent Security Council members, Mr. Vedrine told Radio-J.

Mr. Annan should go to Baghdad only if he had "reasonable chances of

obtaining a result," the minister said. "If there is a complete Iraqi block on everything, there will be no chance of getting a result," he said.

Meanwhile, the U.N. team sent by Mr. Annan on Sunday started a mission to map out the eight presidential sites at the centre of the Iraq crisis as part of efforts to find a diplomatic solution.

Several countries, meanwhile, urged Baghdad to back down and avert a threatened U.S. military attack over its refusal to allow the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of disarming Iraq into the sites.

The three-member U.N. team was headed by Staffan de Mistura, a former U.N. coordinator of humanitarian aid to Iraq, and also comprised two Austrian experts.

They held a meeting with Oil Minister General Amer Mohammad Al Rashid and the foreign ministry undersecretary, Riyadh Al Qaisi, the official news agency INA said.

In a bid to define the sites, the

experts are to spend three or four days mapping out the locations.

The United Nations says the presidential sites contain 1,500 buildings, a figure contested by Iraq. The total area of the eight disputed sites — spread out over four provinces — is around 75 square kilometres.

Baghdad has agreed to open up the sites in response to mediation by Russia and France, but says arms inspections over a proposed 60-day period should be carried out by a special team appointed by Mr. Annan rather than UNSCOM itself.

UNSCOM can form part of the new team, under the Iraqi offer on access to the sites which the Special Commission suspects are being used to conceal banned weapons of mass destruction.

Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan, in talks with Russian envoy Viktor Posuvalyuk, said here Sunday that Iraq was "sincere" in its search for a diplomatic solution.

(Continued on page 7)

'Gulf states cannot afford to finance another war'

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Gulf Arab oil producers cannot afford to finance a fresh war in the region as crude prices have been low and they are already reeling under heavy payments for two previous wars, experts said Sunday.

Although the United States has not made clear whether its Gulf Arab allies would contribute to a possible war effort, several U.S. officials have indicated attacking Iraq would also be aimed at neutralising its threat to neighbours.

"Washington wants Gulf states to know that it is again defending them against Iraq apparently to make them pay," a Gulf-based Arab diplomat said.

"While an attack could be a disaster to Iraq, it will also be a financial disaster to the Gulf countries if they have to finance or part finance it... They are already suffering from a cash crunch because of weak oil prices, payments for two previous wars and growing development needs."

The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, which control nearly 45 per cent of the world's recoverable oil resources, subscribed more than \$60 billion to a U.S.-led allied offensive to eject Iraqi invasion forces from Kuwait in 1991 after nearly seven months of occupation.

The bulk of the funds were paid by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which also provided more than \$30 billion to Iraq to bankroll its 1980-1988 war against

neighbouring Iran. Heavy payments during the 1990-1991 crisis drained Kuwait's overseas investments of nearly \$100 billion and forced Saudi Arabia to borrow from the international market for the first time.

Official figures showed such contributions pushed overall spending by the two countries to a record \$175 billion in 1991 and 1992, nearly 50 per cent higher than in the previous two years.

Despite an increase in Saudi Arabia's revenues due to higher oil production and prices, it suffered from a record budget deficit of around \$31.6 billion in 1991.

Kuwait also reeled under a mammoth shortfall of \$25.3 billion as it also allocated huge sums on post-war reconstruction.

"I don't know whether Gulf states will pay for the war or military mobilisations by the U.S. and Britain this time," a Gulf economist said.

"But any contributions will only aggravate their financial problems as most of them are suffering from deficits in their budgets and balances of payments. I am afraid such payments could be at the expense of development."

Oil prices have dipped to below \$15 a barrel from more than \$23 in January and February last year.

This means the oil earnings of the six GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

Emirates (UAE) — have plunged by at least \$3.5 billion so far this year.

Saudi Arabia and other members which have released their budgets have projected deficits, which could widen by the end of the year if oil prices do not improve.

The shortfall could increase further if the GCC countries were asked to contribute to the war effort and this could prompt them to trim allocations for some development sectors, economists said.

The United States and Britain have assembled a large air and naval force in the Gulf to back their threat of military action against Iraq over the arms inspection crisis.

Some of the reinforcements have been deployed on Kuwaiti territory.

U.S. officials have spoken of a substantial strike which could continue until Iraq backs down. Military experts said it could involve jets and long-range missiles, some of which could be used for the first time.

"This means expenses could run into the billions of dollars. I don't think the United States and Britain will bear those costs alone," a diplomat said.

"Japan could be asked to pay as it did during the 1991 Gulf war. The GCC could also pay but secretly to avoid appearing as a financier of an aggression against an Arab country as it could be called in the region."

King, Arafat discuss peace process, Iraqi-U.N. crisis

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday discussed the peace process stalemate as well as the crisis between Iraq and the United States over U.N. inspection activities in Iraq.

President Arafat, who arrived here in the second such a visit in less than a month, briefed King Hussein on the latest efforts to resume the peace negotiations with Israel, Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Mr. Arafat also briefed the King on proposals to speed up an Israeli pullout from the West Bank and an expected U.S. initiative to save the peace process and to resolve problems," Petra said.

During the meeting, which was also attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the King stressed the need to respect the signed peace agreements in order to pave the way for final status negotiations.

Palestinian Ambassador in Amman, Omar Khatib, who attended the talks, told the Jordan Times that the King and Mr. Arafat also discussed the possibility of holding an Arab summit to discuss the peace process deadlock.

"The two sides agreed to work on holding an Arab summit," Mr. Khatib said.

"The summit's objective is to find a unified Arab stand regarding the peace process and to consult over ways to bring it back on track," added the Palestinian ambassador.

"The Palestinians believe that Netanyahu's policy is responsible for the stalemate in the peace process. He always puts obstacles in the path of peace," added Mr. Khatib.

The Palestinian ambassador emphasised that the two leaders have also discussed diplomatic efforts to resolve the



His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat inspect a guard of honour at the hilltop Raghadan Palace in Amman on Sunday shortly after the Palestinian leader arrived for talks on the peace process with the King (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King discusses Iraqi-U.N. standoff with Annan

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday expressed appreciation of the United Nations efforts for the sake of defusing the Iraqi crisis through a diplomatic solution.

The King, in a telephone conversation with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, said that the peoples of this region look forward to Mr. Annan's visit to Iraq hoping positive results will come out of the visit, warding off a military strike on that country and paving the ground for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

The King and Mr. Annan discussed the ongoing efforts involving the different concerned parties to contain the crisis so as to avert a military strike which would bring about further devastation and chaos and instability to the whole region.

King Hussein emphasised the importance of dialogue among the concerned parties to settle all outstanding issues, stressing the need for Iraq to comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions so that the sanctions can be lifted and the Iraqi people's sufferings can end.

standoff between Iraq and the U.S. and means to avoid a possible American strike.

"His Majesty the King briefed President Arafat on the diplomatic efforts to reach a peaceful breakthrough to the crisis."

"Palestine is also involved in the diplomatic efforts to resolve the deadlock," said Mr. Khatib.

"The Palestinian side believes that a U.S. strike on Iraq will not harm only our brothers in Baghdad but also

the whole region," the Palestinian envoy said.

He said that the Palestinian leader has dispatched former Palestinian ambassador to Baghdad, Azzam Al Ahmad, and member of the Central Committee of the Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fateh), Sakhr Habash, to meet with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"The envoys have carried a message from the president to Mr. Saddam Hussein to emphasise avoiding any confrontation with the United States," added the Palestinian ambassador.

"The two envoys are still there and they will continue their efforts with the Iraqi leadership," added Mr. Khatib.

Before he left Amman, Mr. Arafat met with Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen and discussed with her the stalemate in peace making between the PNA and Israel and the deteriorating economy of the Palestinians in the self-rule areas.

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U.S. deploys six Stealth fighters to Southwest Asia in Iraq crisis

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States has dispatched six F-117A Stealth fighters to Southwest Asia in the build-up of its firepower in the Gulf over the showdown with Iraq, military officials said Sunday.

The radar-evading bomber planes left Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico at 10:30 p.m. Saturday local time, Captain Larry Cox told AFP. He declined to identify the exact destination in Southwest Asia.

The deployment brings to 12 the number of F117-A stealth fighters despatched in advance of a possible military strike, Capt. Cox said. Six fighters were sent to Kuwait last November and are waiting at a base outside Kuwait City. Capt. Cox said the planes were dispatched as part of U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen's order last weekend increasing U.S. forces in and around the Gulf as Washington steps up warnings of a military strike against Iraq over U.N. arms inspections.

Holloman base has another 51 stealth fighters that can be deployed if the order is given, Capt. Cox said.

Prince Hassan says more should be done to defuse Iraqi crisis

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has urged the world community to exert more efforts towards finding a diplomatic solution to the U.N.-Iraq crisis, warning that there was not much time left for defusing the crisis.

"I think the international community should do a lot more as we don't have much time," said Prince Hassan following a meeting at the Royal Court with Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen.

Speaking to journalists, the Crown Prince expressed hope that a visit to Iraq by

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan will be successful, noting that the visit constitutes a kind of agreement between the Security Council members including the U.S. to establish a more direct channel of communication in order to defuse the crisis.

Referring to Jordan's intensive contacts with the different concerned parties to avert a military strike, Prince Hassan said: "We have seen a French initiative, a Russian initiative and we have received the secretary general of the Arab League and we are in contact of course with

President Khatami of Iran who is also the president of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). So we are aware of a number of mediatory initiatives based on two principal themes which the French and the Russians have been discussing for a considerable period of time. One is the extent of technical achievement. I mean, either the work is being done or it is not. So if the question is one of mass-destruction, then we have to identify the ceiling of what has been achieved and I think the U.N. secretary general is intending to do that."

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan, Iraq sign trade protocol

By Ghalia Alal
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iraq and Jordan on Sunday signed their annual trade protocol, keeping the volume of bilateral trade exchanges for 1998 at \$255 million, the same as last year.

But Iraq promised to study the possibility of including a new list of commodities that Jordan could sell to Baghdad during 1998. Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki said after signing the trade protocol with his Iraqi counterpart, Mohammad

Mahdi Saleh. These commodities include cables, matches, medical casts, plastic pipes, poultry, galvanised pipes, fabrics and shoes, the minister added.

The protocol was signed after two days of talks and a series of meetings with Jordanian exporters, many dependent on the Iraqi market for over 15 years.

Of the total trade volume of \$255 million, Dr. Mulki said, \$185 million is allocated to Jordanian products, and the remainder to different services.

"It was decided, for the first time, that a big share of

the trade protocol will be allocated to small- and medium-size enterprises which have received great support from Iraq," Dr. Mulki added.

A total of \$7 million — \$5 million from the 1998 protocol and \$2 million from the 1997 protocol — will be transferred to Jordanian traders in payment of previous debts owed by the Iraqi government.

In addition to exports under the protocol, local traders and industrialists have sold over \$90 million

(Continued on page 7)

هذه امانة للصل

15 Islamists killed in Algeria, two civilians murdered — press

ALGIERS (AFP) — Fifteen Islamist fighters were killed by Algerian security forces and two civilians were murdered in the past two days, press reports said Wednesday, amid controversy over tolls from brutal massacres.

Eleven armed Islamists were killed on Monday and Tuesday in a sweep by security forces in the forest of Bouchaoui, in the western suburbs of Algiers, according to the daily El Watan.

Three others were gunned down on Monday at Ouled Amar, east of the capital, and another at Saïda, southwest of Algiers, the Arabic-language daily El Khabar said.

Two civilians had their throats cut on Tuesday at Constantine, in eastern Algeria, La Tribune reported.

Five people were injured when a home-made bomb went off on Tuesday morning in Ain Bessim, in the Bouira area, southeast of Algiers, El Khabar said.

Another bomb exploded on Tuesday at Timezrit, near Boumerdes, but nobody was hurt.

Differences persisted after the casualty toll from Sunday night's wholesale slaughter at the highland village of Sidi Hammed, south of Algiers, when armed men savagely swept through the community.

Two dailies, L'Authentique and La Tribune, said 138 people had died in the massacre, while El Watan said that its own toll of 400 dead published Tuesday had been compiled by cross-checking various data from different sources including survivors, officials and hospitals.

The interior ministry on Tuesday vigorously denied the toll of 400, also given by Liberte, and insisted that the real figures was 103 dead and 70 wounded.

The pro-government daily El Moudjahid on Wednesday warned that Algeria would "remember the silence observed by certain Arab countries" over the bloodshed in Algeria. The paper did not say to which nations it was referring.

Press reports also said that an armed group had been surrounded by security forces on a hill near Tlemcen, in the far west of Algeria, where there were several massacres of civilians a week ago.

Le Matin reported that armed Islamists had made incursions into the region of Bejaia, east of Algiers, which had until now been spared bloodshed in the latest wave of violence in six years of mounting conflict.

Villagers had reported seeing suspect activities near their hamlets and that fake roadblocks had gone up not far from Seddouk, 40 km west of Bejaia. Motorists had been robbed of their money, Le Matin said.

A court in Tizi Ouzou, in Kabylie, east of Algiers, on Tuesday passed 12 death sentences in absentia against members of an armed group on the run, blamed for atrocities in the Khemis El Khechna region southeast of Algiers.

For El Moudjahid, "helping the Algerian people overcome their difficulties and showing solidarity must involve an unequivocal and firm condemnation of terrorism, demonstration of the will to combat it, and the commitment of the entire international community to the perpetual struggle until it is eradicated."

Algeria's military-backed regime has welcomed the support given by the Arab League, whose envoy, deputy secretary general in charge of information, Mouhab Mekbal, had a meeting Tuesday with President Liamine Zerroual.

Algeria also welcomed the recent adoption in Tunis of a cooperation accord on terrorism among Arab interior ministers ahead of a planned conference in Cairo in April.

"Algerians and Egyptians are expecting a decisive gesture from brother countries," the paper said.

El Moudjahid accused the former colonial power France of practising a "two-faced policy," holding out one hand in friendship while sharpening a knife in the other.

It accused France of showing increasing hostility towards Algeria since 1992, when the military cancelled elections which the Islamic Salvation Front had been poised to win.

France had encouraged the electoral process, "which would have meant the death of Algeria," the paper said.



WAITING: An elderly Palestinian Wednesday stands beside security barriers while waiting for a ride next to Rachel's Tomb, traditionally believed by Jews to be the matriarch's burial site, as it remains under heavy guard by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem. Israel's cabinet decided Wednesday that vast areas of the West Bank must remain under Israeli control in a final peace accord with the Palestinians, including the area around Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, military bases, and historical sites (AP photo)

Jewish militants indicted for plan to throw pig head into Al Aqsa Mosque

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Two Jewish extremists were indicted Wednesday on charges of inciting violence for planning to throw a pig's head into the Al Aqsa Mosque in a bid to damage Arab-Israeli ties, court officials said.

Avigdor Askin and Damian Pakovich are also accused of placing a pig's head on the tomb of Palestinian hero Izzeddin Al Qassam in northern Israel and of setting fire to the offices of a pro-peace group, a court spokesman said.

Police allege Askin planned the acts and Pakovich carried them out as part of

a plan to use pigs heads, considered unclean by Muslims, to ignite Palestinian anger and harm Arab-Israeli relations.

"The suspects planned to cause tension between Jews and Arabs through provocative actions that would cause serious damage to relations between Arab Muslims and Jews," the state prosecutor wrote in the charge sheet.

The two Russian immigrants were arrested in December for planning to launch, from a distance, a pig's head into the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest site in Islam, during prayers for

the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Police accuse the two of wanting to spark violence to derail plans by the Israeli government to withdraw troops from parts of occupied areas of the West Bank.

Askin accused Shin Bet investigators of trying to recruit him as an agent in exchange for his release. He had earlier accused his interrogators of torturing him.

The court granted a police request to hold Askin for another five days but would decide only later in the day on an extension of the arrest of Pakovich.

Lebanese-American was messenger between Syrians, Druze — Israel

ACRE (AFP) — A Lebanese-American detained by Israel has been accused of carrying messages from a pro-Syrian party in Lebanon to Syrian Druze activists on the Golan Heights, officials said Wednesday.

Bishara Hani Sayidi, 35, was arrested on December 25 while visiting the hometown of his Arab Israeli wife near Haifa and was charged with endangering state security and working for a terrorist organisation.

Court officials in Acre said Mr. Sayidi was suspected of carrying a verbal message from members of the Lebanon-based Syrian National Party to Elham Naif Abu Saleh, a Druze activist from Majdan Shams on the occupied Golan Heights.

Abu Saleh, who studies at Damascus University, was arrested in August and charged with spying for Syria. She denied the charges and was released on bail.

Mr. Sayidi, an electrical

engineer of Lebanese descent who has been living in the U.S. state of Michigan for 12 years, has denied the charges against him. The Acre court extended his detention on Tuesday for a further eight days.

His wife Susan insisted her husband was innocent. "He doesn't belong to any organisation except for the Catholic Church in Michigan," she told the Israeli news agency Itim.

According to the Haaretz newspaper, Israeli security services believe Mr. Sayidi received the message for Druze militants seeking to end Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights from a relative who belongs to the Syrian National Party — a group seeking the creation of a Greater Syria.

Israel occupied the Golan Heights in 1967. Syria demands the return of the strategic plateau in exchange for peace with Israel.

Israel frees seven Lebanese after three-week abduction

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Israel on Wednesday released six Lebanese civilians and a policeman who were abducted from the occupied border zone in southern Lebanon three weeks ago, security sources said.

The six villagers were "allowed to return to their home village of Shebaa in the eastern sector of Israel's self-declared 'security zone,'" they said.

The civilians were among 12 people seized from Shebaa three weeks ago, six of whom were freed days after their abduction.

The policeman headed to the nearby town of Hasbaya from where he was seized last month, the security sources said. Israeli forces have barred all Shebaa residents from crossing into Lebanese government-held territory. However, a group of Shebaa inhabitants were allowed to drive out of the border zone earlier Wednesday.

There was no information on the reason for the abductions or the measures imposed by the Israeli forces.

Israeli forces and their allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia often abduct civilians, accusing them of links with guerrilla groups, mainly the Iranian-backed Hizbollah, which spearheads an armed struggle to force Israel out of southern Lebanon.

About 200 Lebanese are detained, mostly without trial or charge and often for several years, in Khaym prison in the border zone and other prisons inside Israel.

Human rights groups have repeatedly denounced cases of torture and ill-treatment of Lebanese detainees in Israeli jails.

Israel also sometimes expels Lebanese families from the border enclave which it established to curb cross-border guerrilla attacks on northern Israel.

Four years in jail for Australian air hostess who smoked hashish

SHARJAH (AFP) — A United Arab Emirates court on Wednesday confirmed a four-year jail sentence for an Australian air hostess convicted of smoking hashish, her lawyer said.

Julia Alexander, 25, an Emirates Airline hostess, was first convicted in June last year by a Sharjah court and launched an appeal in October.

The hostess said she smoked hashish, as confirmed by a urine analysis, while abroad in Sri Lanka before flying back to the UAE.

But the court found that the urine test evidence suggested she had smoked the drug in the

UAE and legal officials said that under UAE law it was an offence for a resident to smoke hashish, even if it was done abroad.

Four years' imprisonment is the maximum sentence for illegal drug consumption in the UAE, her counsel Ahmed Al Rashid said.

"The only recourse remaining is an appeal to the Federal Supreme Court," he said.

"We are expecting to receive an official copy of the court's decision which we will study before taking a decision a week from now."

The court did reduce a life sentence handed

down to a 19-year-old Emirati.

Jamal Al Ghafur was originally convicted of dealing in valium, considered a banned substance in the UAE. At the appeal he was only charged with consuming the drug and his sentence was reduced to four years.

The court confirmed a four-year jail sentence for consumption against a Lebanese national, Roger Louis Ghalib.

They too were convicted on June 21.

In November, a 22-year-old Canadian student was condemned to death for dealing in heroin after being caught in a police sting operation.

Hizbollah activist remains in Israeli custody since 1996

TEL AVIV (AP) — A man working for Hizbollah has been in custody in Israel since 1996 and is being tried in a military court, the army said Tuesday.

The man was identified by army radio as Ali Ahmed Banjaq.

In Beirut, however, a Hizbollah official denied Banjaq was connected to the group. "Banjaq is not a Hizbollah member, he is merely a prisoner in Israel, and we condemn any arrest and any imprisonment of any Lebanese or any innocent person," by Israel, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

14:10 My Little Fairy Tale
14:30 French Programmes
16:15 Prayers
16:30 Believe and Behave
17:00 NBA
18:00 The Prince & The Pauper
18:30 News Headlines
18:35 Big Brother Jake
19:00 Le Journal
19:05 Ramadan Talks
19:35 Black Hat Chief
20:00 Over a Cup of Tea
20:30 Lois & Clark
21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film: "Dance Till Dawn"
23:59 Music Show

Friday Programmes

14:10 Ruybin
14:30 French Programmes
16:15 Prayers
16:30 Believe and Behave
17:00 Wishbone
17:30 Metro Cafe
18:30 News Headlines
18:35 Small Talk
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Ramadan Talk
19:35 Life on the Internet
20:00 Friends
20:30 Adventures of Brisco County
21:10 Knife to the Heart
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series — Streets of Laredo
23:15 Feature Film "Midnight Run"

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fair
06:32 (Sunrise) Doha
11:45 Dhuhur
14:34 Asr
16:58 Maghreb
18:19 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweithel, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armanan International Church Tel. 865897
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 61419

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
During the weekend, skies will be sunny to partly cloudy and winds northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
Amman03/13
Aqaba08/21
Deserts02/14
Jordan Valley08/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 13, Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 70 per cent, Aqaba 34 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Walid Al Masri675485
Dr. Youssef Rashid875792
Dr. Jun'at Abu Dhiab758848
Dr. Khalil Jhal740740
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazin Abu Bakir76852

Al Quds pharmacy1—1
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh982799
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Company636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre813813/352
Khaldi Maternity642816
Akileh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital649131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital09983323
Zarqa National Hospital09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09990990
URBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02755555

Greek Catholic Hospital0272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital02747100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital03131411

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Sana'a (RJ)
08:25Bombyay (RJ)
09:15Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
10:05Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30Colombo (RJ)
15:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05London, Athens (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:15Moscow (RJ)
18:55Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

20:20Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
22:50Cairo (add) (RJ)
23:05Larnaca (RJ)

Other Flights

13:15Riyadh (SV)
14:10Sharjah (AH)
15:00Doha (QR)
15:20Muscat, Doha (GF)
16:00Dubai (EK)
16:30Rome (AZ)
20:00Tel Aviv (MS)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:10Istanbul (TK)
23:30London, Beirut (BA)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)
07:45Aqaba (RW)
09:05Amman (QALIA) (RW)
09:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30Amman (QALIA) (RW)
21:20Aqaba (RW)
22:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20Beirut (RJ)
09:00Moscow (RJ)
11:00Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:30Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:45Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:15Athens, Paris (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
19:30Cairo, (add) (RJ)

19:50Larnaca (RJ)
20:10Cairo (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
23:00Jakarta (RJ)
00:30New Delhi (add) (RJ)
01:45Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

00:35Amsterdam (KL)
03:00Athens (OA)
06:40Beirut, London (BA)
08:00Beirut (ME)
11:20London (BA)
14:45Riyadh (SV)
15:00Algiers (AR)
15:55Doha (QR)
16:20Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
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17:30Rome (AZ)
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21:50Aqaba (RW)

Queen inaugurates Zaha Cultural Centre for Children, officially opens city hall

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday inaugurated the Zaha Cultural Centre for Children in the Rjoum Khilja district in western Amman, according to a press release Wednesday.

The centre, which was named after its benefactor Zaha Jardaneh-Mango, comprises a library, a computer centre, a small cinema, an outdoor theatre, two tennis courts, children's playgrounds, and a cafeteria situated within a nine-dunum park donated by the Greater Amman Municipality.

The Queen expressed her gratitude and appreciation for Mrs. Jardaneh-Mango's generous donation, which she said "represents a fine example of cooperation between individuals and local authorities in establishing projects that enhance national development and address children's recreational, artistic, and cultural needs."

In December 1996, Mrs. Zaha Mango donated JD300,000 to the Amman Municipality to finance the construction of a children's park. The latter developed to include a cultural centre, to which she donated an additional JD50,000, the announcement read.

According to Mrs. Jardaneh-Mango, children in Amman "generally play on the street and do not have many places to go for recreational purposes."

When asked about her donation, she simply said, "I wished to pay tribute to my country, which has honoured me."

The mayor of Amman, Mamdouh Abbadi, and Mrs. Jardaneh-Mango attended the opening of the centre with the Queen.

Later, Queen Noor officially opened the Amman City Hall in Ras Al Ein. The three-story building was designed by two leading Jordanian architects, Ja'far Toukan and Rassem Badran, who favoured a contemporary Islamic architectural style, the statement read.

It includes a complete floor for exhibitions by local and international artists and is currently hosting three exhibits by Jordanian artists. The city hall also comprises the headquarters of the city council, meeting rooms for the various municipal committees, and the mayor of Amman's office.

Over the past three years, the Municipality of Amman has embarked upon a master plan to revitalise the old city



Her Majesty Queen Noor and Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi meet several children at the new Zaha Cultural Centre for Children

temporary Islamic architectural style, the statement read.

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Over the past three years, the Municipality of Amman has embarked upon a master plan to revitalise the old city

centre, whose nucleus is "Sahat Al Muhajireen" in Ras Al Ein. The development plan of the "Sahat," which is in the shape of a crescent measuring around 140 dunums, includes the building of a city hall, a mosque, a convention centre, a national museum and library, as well as a public park and gardens, the press release said.

Dr. Abbadi and municipal officials attended the opening of the City Hall with the Queen. The release concluded.

The annual campaign is designed to raise funds to help the poor by providing cash or medical equipment, or financing students' tuition at colleges, among other ways.

The committee said the donations demonstrate real social solidarity in Jordan. The committee includes representatives of a number of private and public organisations.

lected and those distributed to the needy, as well as the activities of the committee members to promote the fundraising campaign.

Following the meeting, the committee issued an appeal to the public to contribute generously to this humanitarian cause and voiced appreciation for those individuals and organisations who have offered cash or in-kind contributions to the committee for

months, according to Dr. Mulki.

Speaking in the presence of engineer Amer Majali, director general of the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC), Dr. Mulki said the first phase of the project entails laying the infrastructure services and civil works. These include building main and side roads, laying telephone, water, sewage, and electricity networks, lighting the streets, and installing an elevated water tower with a 350 cubic metre capacity, a ground water storage tank with a 1,200 cubic metre capacity, and a wastewater treatment plant that can treat 700 cubic metres of waste water per day, he said.

The civil works also entail erecting an administrative building, multi-purpose halls 1,450 square metres in area, and premises that can house government offices, in addition to a complex that will

house banks, a cafeteria, and a supermarket, he added.

Dr. Mulki said the government has made plans to establish industrial estates in every governorate.

For his part, Mr. Majali said the first phase of the Karak industrial estate will be financed by the JIEC. He added that the establishment of this estate should reflect positively on the development of the southern regions of Jordan, since it will absorb many local workers who will receive vocational training before being offered jobs at the industrial estate.

With the completion of the Karak industrial estate, Jordan will have carried three such projects: the first was the Sahab industrial city near Amman, built in the late 1970s, and the second was Al Hassan industrial city near the northern town of Ramtha, built in 1992.

Refinery company denies reports of gas shortage

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) has sufficient public supplies of gas for use in homes and other purposes and there is no truth in the rumours that there is a shortage of this vital commodity, JPRC Director General Abdul Wahab Zou'bi said Wednesday.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted Mr. Zou'bi as making the remarks in reaction to reported public complaints over the past two days that gas cylinders were in short supply during the snowstorm.

"The JPRC's depots have 10,000 tonnes of gas in store, and the refinery daily fills 110,000 gas cylinders, of which nearly 50,000 are distributed in Amman alone," according to Mr. Zou'bi.

He said workers at the refinery are working two uninterrupted shifts to fill the empty cylinders being returned to the company by distributors around the Kingdom.

Mr. Zou'bi noted that the delay in the supply of gas cylinders to homes was probably due to the delay in distribution caused by the recent bad weather conditions.

But Yousef Abdul Jajil, deputy president of the fuel distributors association, had previously said 50,000 gas cylinders were not enough for Amman. He added that at least 60,000 cylinders are needed daily to overcome the shortage, especially in the light of the increased demand for gas use for domestic purposes in the cold weather.

Mr. Zou'bi replied by saying that the JPRC does not keep extra stocks of gas cylinders but is continually filling empty cylinders, which are returned to the refinery by the gas distributors.

King hosts iftar for military officials

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday hosted an iftar banquet with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan at Al Hussein Sports City for senior military officers and retired veterans. Attending the banquet were Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Zeid Ben Shaker, and Prince Talal. Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, the King's Advisor Salah Abu Zeid, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh, and other senior

officers. The King and the audience performed the Maghreb prayers.

Badran named Palestinian affairs department head

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Cabinet has appointed Ibrahim Badran as director general of the Department of Palestinian Affairs, succeeding Ibrahim Tarshihi, who recently retired. Prior to his appointment to the new post, Dr. Badran was working as an advisor at the Prime Ministry. Dr. Badran also worked as executive director of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and secretary general of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

Crown Prince highlights importance of technical cooperation with company

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday highlighted the benefits of technical cooperation between the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and Lloyds Register Quality Assurance Limited, in such areas as quality assurance, exchange of technical expertise, and environmental protection.

In a meeting with Lloyds Register Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding, under which the two parties will carry out an evaluation of environmental management systems and hold joint symposia and training workshops. Moreover, Lloyds Register will provide technical support for studies and research designed to improve quality in Jordanian industries.

In an interview with Jordan Television after his meeting with Prince Hassan, Mr. O'Ferrall said, "We explained the agreement to the Crown Prince and he was very pleased and encouraged us to develop it. We'll work together in various fields, in environmental assurance, inspection, use of laboratories, and technical seminars."

The memorandum was signed for the RSS by Mr. Alloush and for Lloyds Register by Mr. O'Ferrall.

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman Court has ended the interrogation of four Iraqis allegedly involved in the attack against the Iraqi commercial attaché in Amman and has charged two of them with attempted murder, a court spokesperson said Wednesday.

Mohammed Harahsheh, a prosecutor at the Amman Court, said the four were transferred to the High Criminal Court, while a fifth was interrogated as a witness to the attack against Rahim Taher, 45.

The Iraqi diplomat escaped unhurt after two gunmen approached him and fired one bullet at his car earlier this month. "Our interrogations are over. The case's file was transferred to the criminal

court and I think the trial will begin soon," Mr. Harahsheh said.

Mr. Harahsheh said the diplomat's son, Samir, who enjoys diplomatic immunity, was involved in the attack against his father.

The attorney said the criminal court will ask that the diplomatic immunity of Mr. Taher's son be lifted to allow his interrogation on his alleged involvement in the attack against his father.

It was unclear if the Iraqi embassy will allow the lifting of diplomatic immunity of Mr. Taher's son, who still lives in the Kingdom.

"It is necessary to interrogate Mr. Taher's son, because his testimony will reveal new elements in the case," Mr. Harahsheh said.

The prosecutor told the Jordan Times that Mr. Taher's mother-in-law, Houriyah Abbas Kazim, who lives in Iraq, masterminded the attack against her son-in-law for "family and financial reasons."

He said Ms. Houriyah's extradition to stand trial in Amman is not expected.

Mr. Harahsheh said Qasim Rajihi and Ja'far No'uman were the two suspects charged with attempted murder, while Ahmad Muhsin and Ahmad Tae'i were charged with complicity in the attack.

He added that a fifth Iraqi, who is considered a witness, was interrogated but not charged.

According to Mr. Harahsheh, Mr. Rajihi and Mr. No'uman carried out the attack, in which one bullet was shot at Mr. Taher's car near his residence in the Umm Oth-einah area.

Mr. Harahsheh did not rule out summoning Mr.

Taher to testify in the trial "since he is considered the major witness."

The attorney did not confirm reports that Mr. Taher's mother-in-law planned the attack to avenge the "mistreatment" of her daughter by the Iraqi official.

On Tuesday, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said the suspects used false Iraqi passports.

Dr. Mutawi ruled out any "political motives" behind the attack, saying that it was carried out solely for "family and financial reasons."

Following the attack, Iraqi diplomats blamed the attack on Iraqi opposition and Israeli elements, saying that it was aimed at "disturbing the relationship between Iraq and Jordan."

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The defence attorney in the case of 35-year-old Fateh Jilasi, accused of murdering a Syrian family in June 1997, Wednesday told the Criminal Court in his closing argument that his client was innocent and should be acquitted of all charges.

"Three other people told my client they would kill his children if he did not confess to being the murderer," Attorney Ibrahim Sha'ath told the court.

Mr. Jilasi reportedly confessed to authorities on June 19 that he murdered Jamal Abdo, 38, and his wife Manal Othman, 35, on June 16 and their son Khalid, two, on

June 17, for reasons connected with financial problems with Mr. Abdo's father.

However, Mr. Jilasi later retracted his confessions and claimed in court last month that he suffered from depression and mental illness. He denied being the killer of the family, alleging that he only wanted to abduct them for ransom.

He testified that the actual killers, three people residing in Syria, threatened him because he owed them money.

"My client went to the victims' house with drugged juice, and it is evident that his sole intention was to abduct the family for ransom and not to kill them," the attorney said in his 13-

page closing argument.

Mr. Jilasi is formally charged by the prosecution with theft, molestation, arson, abduction, and three counts of premeditated murder, a charge that could result in the death penalty.

The court tribunal, headed by Judge Mohammad Ajarmeh and including Judges Mifteh Mubaidin and Issa Hamdan, adjourned until Wednesday, Jan. 21, at which time the court will either issue a verdict or further review the case.

Last week, Criminal Prosecutor Saleh Lawzi asked the court in his closing argument to convict Mr. Jilasi on all charges to set an example for others. Mr. Lawzi stated that the defendant

"confessed willingly that he plotted to kill the couple and abduct their child, knowing that they had nothing to do with the financial dispute with Jamal's father."

According to the charge sheet, the suspect, who entered the Kingdom in March to kill the family, went to their house three months later, drugged them, killed Mr. Abdo and Ms. Othman, and fled with the child.

The suspect took the child to hide at a relative's house, but the woman refused to receive him. He then strangled the child and buried him at a farm in Madaba the following day, the charge sheet stated.

Israel decides to keep most of W. Bank under its control in final settlement

(Continued from page 1)

The ministers did not define the areas to remain under Israeli control in detail, but Israel Radio said they amounted to about 60 per cent of the West Bank. In previous sessions, ministers were shown two possible plans to keep either half or nearly two-thirds of the land.

The security zones listed in the cabinet decision included the eastern and western edges of the West Bank, the area

around Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, military bases, major north-south and east-west roads, water sources and historical sites.

Mr. Netanyahu's senior adviser, David Bar-Illan, told the Associated Press that the decision was vague enough to give Mr. Netanyahu room to negotiate in Washington.

"Obviously, the decision leaves leeway," Mr. Bar-Illan said. "We did not want to specify a percentage or draw a line on a map."

In a U.S.-backed accord Mr. Netanyahu signed a year ago, he committed himself to a three-stage pullback by mid-1998.

With the resignation of moderate Foreign Minister David Levy earlier this month, Mr. Netanyahu has become more vulnerable to threats from hawks who threaten to bring down his government over a West Bank troop withdrawal.

Mr. Bar-Illan said the scope of a limited troop pullback in the West Bank would be discussed in two, perhaps three more sessions ahead of the Clinton-Netanyahu summit.

Mr. Clinton expects Mr. Netanyahu to present a detailed plan for a troop pullback. However, Mr. Bar-Illan said Mr. Netanyahu would only go to Washington with a general outline, not specific percentages and maps.

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Ramadan charity campaign committee reviews activities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Higher Committee of the Ramadan Charity Campaign, sponsored by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAFSD), held a meeting Wednesday to review the campaign's activities during the first half of the month of Ramadan.

The meeting, which was chaired by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi, reviewed the amount of donations col-

lected and those distributed to the needy, as well as the activities of the committee members to promote the fundraising campaign.

Following the meeting, the committee issued an appeal to the public to contribute generously to this humanitarian cause and voiced appreciation for those individuals and organisations who have offered cash or in-kind contributions to the committee for

months, according to Dr. Mulki.

Speaking in the presence of engineer Amer Majali, director general of the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC), Dr. Mulki said the first phase of the project entails laying the infrastructure services and civil works. These include building main and side roads, laying telephone, water, sewage, and electricity networks, lighting the streets, and installing an elevated water tower with a 350 cubic metre capacity, a ground water storage tank with a 1,200 cubic metre capacity, and a wastewater treatment plant that can treat 700 cubic metres of waste water per day, he said.

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officers. The King and the audience performed the Maghreb prayers.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FRENCH COMEDY CINEMA

* "Tango" and "La totale" on Thursday and Friday respectively at Philadelphia Cinema at 8:30 p.m. (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre).

SECOND PLASTIC ART WEEK

* Abstract (plastic) art by several artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 17.

* Film on renowned French artist Henry Matisse at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

* Concert by Jordanian artist Nasr Al Zuhbi at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Germany could give green light to police bugging

BONN (AFP) — In the name of fighting organised crime, Germany could allow police to bug the homes and offices of certain individuals in what has been a fiery debate over whether a person's home is really his castle.

The proposal goes to a vote Friday in the Bundestag, or Lower House of Parliament, where it is expected to win easy approval.

But the outcome is less certain in the Bundesrat, or Upper House, where the opposition Social Democrats and the radical Greens — the latter categorically opposed to bugging — have a majority.

To boost its chances, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's centre-right coalition pushed for a compromise text drawn up with the opposition.

This ironically was reached in a marathon, late-night session last week only hours after similar attempts to work out some sort of tax reform foundered — both sides surely mindful that fighting crime tends to draw more votes than shifting tax burdens in an election year.

Germany goes to the polls on Sept. 27 where Mr.

Kohl, a Christian Democrat, and his centre-right coalition is expected to face a tough challenge from the opposition as Mr. Kohl's own popularity has slipped behind that of both SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine and possible SPD challenger Gerhard Schröder.

The coalition pushed for a compromise text since the vote involves amending the constitution, a test of fire that requires a two-thirds majority in both houses. In this case, it would change article 13 of the constitution that guarantees the inviolability of an individual's right to privacy at home.

If it passes, German courts will be able to order electronic bugging of professionals who might have information on organised crime.

Only clergy, lawyers in criminal cases and deputies would be excused from the possibility of secret police bugging. But journalists, lawyers in civil cases, notaries, accountants, doctors and other financial consultants, all professions that rely on professional secrecy, could have their homes or offices bugged.

The only restriction would be for the courts to

first establish whether bugging would truly advance an inquiry, then determine if the information obtained from electronic monitoring is worth using.

Technically, the police will be able to either hide microphones in the homes of suspects or set up sophisticated remote-listening devices. They will add to the array of bugging already used on telephone lines.

If Interior Minister Manfred Kanther hailed what he called "progress in the fight against organised crime," the Greens have blasted what they see as the "dismantling of fundamental rights."

Bugging remains a volatile issue in Germany, where since Nazi days anything perceived as repressing individual freedoms tends to elicit a visceral protest.

The professionals who might find their homes or offices bugged have also reacted with outrage. The Federation of German Journalists (DJV) said Monday it would file a complaint with the federal constitutional court. DJV President Hermann Meyn told a press conference here that democracy was in danger if journalists and their sources must fear being bugged.

Similarly, Germany's doctors' federation vowed that in the name of medical secrecy, it would fight the provision on "all levels" of the court system, straight up to the constitutional court. Its head, physician Karsten Vilmar, said the proposed law was "contradictory in itself" since doctors were already bound by medical secret.

Germany's attorneys' organisation, the Order of Lawyers, also denounced this "unacceptable" project it said was a "vision of horror."

The debate, which has dragged on for a few years, has already prompted the resignation of one irate minister.

The junior partner in Mr. Kohl's coalition, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), which is a traditional defender of individual rights, hesitated before finally dropping its opposition to the bugging proposals in December 1995.

Feeling her party had given in to pressure, then FDP Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger promptly resigned.



Police and forensic experts inspect a bus after a jealous man exploded a gas canister on it in southern Spain to settle scores with his former girlfriend's husband, injuring all three, officials said. Both men were taken to a Seville hospital with serious injuries, while the woman was taken to another hospital in the southern city with less serious injuries, officials said. The bus driver, the only other person on the bus, was not injured, officials said. The authorities said the attacker had been in trouble with the police before (AFP photo)

Taleban plane crashes into remote mountainside, 80 dead

QUETTA, Pakistan (AFP) — Pakistani rescue teams said Wednesday all 80 people on board a Taleban plane were killed when it slammed into a mountain in bad weather in a remote part of Pakistan and burst into flames.

"The plane wreckage and the bodies of passengers are spread over a one kilometre radius," a rescuer at the crash site, 70 kilometres northwest of Quetta, told a frontier border guard.

A senior official from the Taleban Islamic militia said there were no high-ranking officials on board the Antonov 32 which he said had crashed when it ran out of fuel after turning back from its destination in bad weather late Tuesday.

The first Pakistani rescue teams, battling through the night as heavy rain and fog as well as rough terrain hampered their efforts to reach the crash site near the Kojak pass in Baluchistan province, bordering Afghanistan, border guards said.

According to initial reports, the plane was flying at low-altitude on approach to Quetta airport when it slammed into a mountain.

Speaking by satellite telephone to AFP, Taleban official Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil said the plane was a Soviet-made Antonov 32 which got lost after searching for an emergency landing strip.

"Thanks to Allah no senior officials were among the passengers. They were mostly ordinary passengers and low ranking Taleban," Mutawakil said from the southern Taleban stronghold of Kandahar.

"It was an Antonov 32 plane, and it crashed after it ran out of fuel," the official explained. "We have sent teams to the area to bring the dead bodies back."

Mr. Mutawakil said the plane had taken off from the southern Afghan city of Kandahar to make a 440 kilometre trip to the western city of Herat, but was forced to turn back when the weather deteriorated.

"By the time the plane returned here the weather was also bad and it could not land, so it had to try to land in Quetta," Mr. Mutawakil explained.

He said the plane turned south to make an emergency landing in the Pakistani city of Quetta, 200 kilometres southeast of

Kandahar, but became lost and ran out of fuel, before crashing.

Colonel Mujtaba of the paramilitary Frontier Constabulary told AFP Tuesday the rugged mountainous area where the plane crashed was inaccessible even by jeep.

Pakistani sources said arrangements had been made at Quetta airport for the night landing and the pilot had received navigation instructions.

But they said the plane developed some "technical fault" and, crashed, near Kojak pass about 20 kilometres from the Afghan border.

"I saw the plane engulfed in flames, come down in the mountains," a Frontier Constabulary officer manning a Pakistani border post said.

The Taleban control two-thirds of Afghanistan, mostly the southern half of the country as well as the capital Kabul.

In August, the anti-Taleban alliance suffered a huge blow when its newly-appointed premier Abdul Rahim Ghafoor and six other senior figures were killed in a plane crash in central Afghanistan.

SLORC founder and former minister dies

BANGKOK (AFP) — A former minister and founding member of Burma's military government has died of cancer in a Rangoon hospital, sources said Wednesday.

Lieutenant-General Sein Aung, who was one of the original members of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) when it was formed 10 years ago, died of colon cancer on Jan. 9, sources here and in Rangoon said. The 68-year-old veteran soldier lost his last formal position on Dec. 10 last year when the advisory body — to which he had been relegated when the SLORC was disbanded a month earlier — was dissolved.

A Burmese student opposition group based here said in a statement that Sein Aung, while "not included in the arrests of former generals on charges of corruption, was being watched by Military Intelligence personnel."

The All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) was referring to several top generals who were put under virtual house arrest shortly after SLORC was dissolved amid reported allegations of official corruption.

A source in Rangoon said the general's official obituary had appeared in the Rangoon papers, but noted that "it is a little surprising that there was no mention of the fact that he was a senior minister."

The official passage reportedly only included Sein Aung's military rank when describing his life.

The All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) also said Sein Aung had been head of the junta's Special Operations Bureau before a student uprising in 1988 which ended in a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.

He then became one of the founding members of the SLORC when it was formed in September 1988 and was named head of both the country's industry ministries.

He was later appointed minister of one of the industry branches after a ministerial reshuffle in January 1992.

Sein Aung remained a member of the junta until November, when the SLORC was dissolved to become the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in an apparent attempt at official window-dressing.

He left his final post when the advisory body — to which 14 senior generals were appointed on the dissolution of the SLORC in an apparent move to sideline them — was abolished.

Sein Aung entered the military in 1950 and served as a commander of a division in the northeast of the country.

Winnie will not stand for president — paper

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Winnie Madikizela-Mandela will not run for South Africa's presidency, the feisty former wife of President Nelson Mandela told the Star newspaper here Wednesday.

"I was just playing with the media, this kind of game," she said, referring to earlier intimations that she would consider running for president.

Ms. Madikizela-Mandela — who made no reference in the soft-focus interview to her recent nine days of gruelling testimony before South Africa's truth body — said her biggest regret was not being able to give her children a normal life.

"It haunts me, day and night," the 63-year-old said candidly. "I should have been there (for my children)."

Ms. Madikizela-Mandela has two daughters with her former husband. She raised Zenani, 38, and Zindziwe, 36, while Mr. Mandela spent 27 years in jail, facing constant harassment from South Africa's notorious security police.

The grandmother of eight, hailed as one-time mother of the nation despite

the reign of terror induced by her bodyguards in the black township of Soweto in the 1980s, said she had no regrets about her divorce from Mr. Mandela.

"Please! He just handed me back my freedom," she said.

Married in 1958, the two were divorced in April 1996 after a separation. Although Ms. Madikizela-Mandela was at Mr. Mandela's side upon his release from jail in 1990, their relationship soon soured and talk of extramarital affairs by Ms. Madikizela-Mandela surfaced.

"We — Nelson and I — never even gave it a chance. You see, I truly understand the wives of other inmates. Some of them could not cope with it. Facing life in prison. Nobody gave these women a thought," the head of the ruling Party's Women's League said.

"I, on the other hand, felt it was my responsibility to maintain Nelson Mandela's name, legacy, everything," she said.

She sacrificed "my youth, my everything" in the process.

But she never contemplated divorcing him. "I felt deeply that it was my main role to be there (for him). And for what we fought for."

In an apparent dig at her ex-husband's place in the history books, Ms. Madikizela-Mandela said the time to judge the world-renowned statesman had yet to come.

"He is being admired politically by the 'whites'. They love him. There will be the right time to discuss his role in history. But I have been fighting for him, for his image as a leader, grandfather, father," she said.

She refused to comment on Mr. Mandela's blossoming relationship with Mozambican Graca Machel. "When the time comes, I will talk about it. Everything!"

Ms. Madikizela-Mandela has in the past snubbed the widow of former Mozambican President Samora Machel and has urged South Africa's government to clamp down on the problem of "illegal aliens" from neighbouring countries, especially Mozambique.

Cameroon journalists jailed for report about president

DOUALA (AFP) — A court has jailed two journalists on conviction of publishing false news about Cameroon's President Paul Biya and another official, judicial sources said in the economic capital Douala.

The court late Tuesday sentenced Plus Njawa, managing editor of the weekly Le Messager, to two years behind bars and imprisoned the managing editor of Aurore Plus, Michel Michaut Moussala, for six months.

Njawa, whose arrest and detention provoked strong protests from the opposition, was also fined 500,000 CFA francs (\$820) by the court, which issued arrest warrants against two other journalists.

Moussala, who was convicted on the same charge of "spreading false information", escaped from the court shortly before the sentence was handed down, sources said, without immediately giving further details.

Njawa was taken back to the New Bell prison where he had been detained since Dec. 24.

The editor of Le Messager was jailed because of a story he published on Dec. 22 which reported that Mr. Biya had suffered from chest pains, indicating heart problems, as he was watching the country's football cup final.

Moussala was convicted after the head of the national ports authority, Tchouta Moussa, who is a member of Mr. Biya's governing party, filed a suit against the weekly Aurore Plus, which had accused him of embezzling public funds, importing arms and plotting a coup d'état.

A spokesman for the group, the Plus Njawa Liberation Committee, said that the march would take place if the journalist "does not obtain bail or at least the right to receive visits."

This month, dozens of police in anti-riot gear, armed with tear gas and water cannons, were deployed to cordon off the New Bell prison in Douala to keep Mr. Njawa's backers at bay.

Whites suffered as much as Aboriginals, claims Hanson

SYDNEY (AFP) — Fewer Aboriginal children were stolen from their parents than the 40,000 "stolen" British children sent to Australia in the same post war period, anti-Asia MP Pauline Hanson claimed Wednesday.

Ms. Hanson, who is campaigning for cuts to Australia's immigration programme and reduced Aboriginal welfare funding, also described the landrights debate currently raging here as "another scam" perpetrated against white Australia.

"The fact is Aborigines continue to be given more than other Australians," she said in her regular column written for The Ipswich Advertiser in her Queensland electorate.

She said 15 per cent of Australia was already in Aboriginal hands and Aborigines were reaping millions of dollars payments and royalties from mining companies.

Australia is facing an early election this year over the government's failed attempt to persuade the senate to accept its entirety legislation aimed

at reducing landrights to which the High Court judged Aborigines are entitled.

Ms. Hanson said Australians had long been subjected to "a shameless PR campaign aimed at developing guilt amongst non-Aboriginals" and an example of this was the stolen children's report "Bringing Them Home."

"While there is no denying the sadness embodied in this report, its promotion has been aimed at raising guilt, therefore raising the willingness to compensate Aborigines," Ms. Hanson said.

The way the report was presented and the subsequent demand for a national apology gave the impression that "these awful privations were owned and experienced solely by Aborigines," she said adding: "This is of course, a lie."

"Evidence indicates the 40,000 stolen British children sent to Australia over the same period far outnumbered the Aborigines and their experience was at least as bad, possibly worse."

Aboriginals, she said, did not have a monopoly on suffering

"either now or in the past."

She was referring to the generations of Aboriginal children separated from their parents by official policy and sent to foster homes where a large percentage were abused physically and sexually.

Although precise estimates of the numbers are hard to find, Aboriginal groups believe hundreds of thousands of children were victims of the policy.

Historian Jackie Huggins, a member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and a commissioner for the Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Children, described Ms. Hanson's column as "disturbing" and erroneous.

Aboriginal people "owned less than one per cent of Australia through native title claims, not 15 per cent as Ms. Hanson claimed," Mr. Huggins said.

She said it was true some white children had been removed from their parents, but the process was not carried out on the basis of race and they were not forcibly assimilated into another culture.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
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Facsimile: 696183

E-mail: jtimes@go.com.jo

Web Sites: http://accessme/JordanTimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Show hand or fall?

MR. ARAFAT'S visit to Amman earlier this week and his talks with His Majesty King Hussein came on the eve of the Palestinian leader's impending trip to Washington for a crucial meeting with President Bill Clinton. The King has leverage with both the U.S. and Israel, which the Palestinians would like to invest in a last-ditch effort to save the peace process from collapse. While His Majesty believes Israel's current government has not matched repeated gestures by the Arab side to move the peace effort forward, he has maintained contact with the Israeli body politic, and certainly President Clinton among other world leaders, in unceasing attempts to keep the process alive. The King last week met with Labour leader Ehud Barak and Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, yesterday with a Shas delegation and will probably soon receive moderate Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in trying to achieve this goal.

At this stage there may be no point in talking with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu since his intransigence and obstinacy would only cast a pall on what is being sought. The Likud-led coalition has shown time and again that it will continue to drag its feet to avoid taking the kind of decisions that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has called for in 1998. In addition, Netanyahu has come up with a new list of 12 conditions which the Palestinians have to meet before he would order even a modest redeployment of his army from Palestinian areas. This list can be viewed as nothing short of extra hurdles being erected by his government to stop the peace process altogether.

So what is the point of talking to Netanyahu, for Jordan in particular, under the circumstances?

There may be no easy answer to such a difficult question. There has to be hope, however, that President Clinton will stick to his guns when he sees the Israeli prime minister in Washington on Jan. 20.

Against American insistence Netanyahu will then have to either show his hand over whether and how much of the West Bank he is willing to give up to the Palestinians, in honouring his country's commitment to the Oslo and Hebron accords, or he will risk his government's fall.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i criticised a decision by the Lebanese government preventing Lebanese satellite stations from broadcasting news as a means of stifling the media and preventing it from reporting to the world about the real situation in Lebanon. Fahed Fanek charged that the decision was designed to help cover up for the rampant corruption and abuse of power that has been spreading in Lebanon. Concealing the truth and preventing the public from obtaining information is an anti-democracy policy in a country which has been known to be democratic before the civil war, noted the writer. The government's decision, he added, is designed, for instance, to prevent the world from knowing the facts about corruption cases which have caused Lebanon to be indebted by \$17 billion up from \$500 million in 1992. The government does not want to expose the fact that the prime minister's policies have caused Lebanon to become bankrupt and does not want any opposition to his power, hence the decision to silence the satellite stations, according to the writer. He said despite the fact that Lebanon is not an independent country due to the presence of Syrian and Israeli armies on its territories, and despite the government's arbitrary decision against the media, the Lebanese people will remain free and no one can silence the voice of truth.

MOHAMMAD SUBEHI, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm strongly criticised Syria for its unjustified media campaign against Jordan. Expressing dismay over Damascus' ongoing hostile campaign against Amman, the writer said the Syrian regime has been antagonising its neighbours and conspiring against them, citing its siding with Iran during the Iraqi-Iranian war and anti-Iraq stance during the Gulf war which drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. The writer said Syria maintains its occupation of Lebanon against the will of its people and has adamantly refused to see any Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon because such act would give Syria no further excuse to retain its forces in Lebanon. The writer said that Syria which criticises Jordan for making peace with Israel is a close ally of Egypt, the country which had concluded a peace treaty with the Jewish state and was about to sign a peace treaty with Israel before the assassination of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

View from Academia

The need for easier access to books

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

I WAS browsing through a book catalogue sent to me via airmail from an international publisher the other day. The catalogue contains information about the "most interesting books in print to own." And indeed the selections are extremely interesting. Everything you wish to read — aside from how to books, that is (i.e. how to cook delicious meals, how to lose weight, how to be more attractive, how to win a lottery, how to survive in Las Vegas, etc.) — is found in the catalogue. Furthermore, you can order any book no matter where your location is on the world map, and you can send the payment through any one of the six or seven most convenient means of money transfer. So far so good. What more do you want?

There is one problem, however, the price of most books is outrageously high. Most paperback novels are in the neighbourhood of \$6-10 if they are classic and \$10-15, if they are fairly recent. As for studies (in the fields of literature, history, government, political science, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, etc.), they are in the neighbourhood of \$15-25. If you live in Jordan (or any other "international" country, you have to add about \$2-5 for shipping and handling). Notice that I am talking about paperbacks, not hard-cover editions. This is a lot.

In the better old days (i.e. as recently as the mid-eighties), you could buy almost any paperback novel for \$2-4 and any paperback study for \$6-10 on average. When I was teaching at Yarmouk University in the mid and late eighties, my students were buying classic paperbacks for as low as JD1 or less and huge literary anthologies for JD6-10. Now the least expensive novel or play costs them JD3-6 and the average anthology costs JD20-35. Unfortunately, book prices have risen tremendously over the past decade.

We understand several things at once related to publishing books. The cost for publishers is itself high, and the publishers clearly need to make some profit. Add to this the profit which the book distributor, agent or seller (in the country of origin, in the region, and locally) wants to make. We also understand that there are some publishers who have been producing cheaper books, and the number of these is on the increase (even though many of them are not yet known to the majority of buyers). And we understand that the same price is not seen in the same way by international clients. Depending on how well or badly your economy and your currency are doing, a 10-dollar book may seem either highly expensive or reasonably priced.

In a country like ours, books are expensive. Most local books (published in Arabic) are generally less costly than those imported from abroad, but even books in Arabic have increased in cost significantly over the past decade.

Whatever the causes behind the increase, clients locally and the world over are having a rough time affording books to buy or "own." At a time when, especially in this part of the world, we are calling for facilitating access to books in order to a) enable students (and learners of all ages) to have access to important books (ancient or contemporary) and to b) encourage the public at large (which reads less — way less — than we desire) to read more, the hike in the price of books is bad news indeed.

Two factors aggravate the problem. The first has to do with the unfortunate facts that not only individuals but also institutions (including major libraries) are finding it difficult to buy the books which their own users need. The second has to do with the fact that readers do not read fiction or poetry books alone. Our public as elsewhere in the modern world is, due to the spread of education, becoming more literate. And it is common for people to want to read studies (political, economic, scientific, sociological, anthropological, archaeological) not just fiction.

God knows what the effect of modern information technology (CD-Rom and the Internet, for example) on readership will be, and God knows what will happen to printed books as the information technology continues to expand. Until the shape of things to come (i.e. the future of information technologies and technologies of communication) becomes crystal clear, we need to do something serious and effective in the service of both students and readers of all types.

If I were to offer a few suggestions, I would say the following:

1. If the cause behind the price increase has to do with the quality of form, I believe that we can do with less paper quality, ink quality and cover quality. What is the use of beautiful paper, beautiful ink, and a beautiful cover, if the average person cannot afford to buy it? The book industry has a lesson to learn, at this level, from other types of industries. Most automobile industries still produce luxurious, top-of-the-line cars; but most of them have started manufacturing cars with less quality but at a more affordable price. There is a lesson to be learned from the popularity of the less costly Korean, Russian, Italian, and Japanese cars. Some people cannot afford a Mercedes or even a good Japanese car. What should they do? If quality can be compromised a little even in cars when safety is a great consideration, we can compromise a little when it comes to books. Those who can afford a 25-dollar book edition, let them buy it. But let's also make editions for the less privileged.

Along these lines, those publishers who have started coming out with cheaper editions need to make themselves and their products more known to readers.

2. There needs to be closer coordination and cooperation among our educational institutions (schools, public and private; universities; public libraries, etc.) than there is at this point. The system of inter-library loans needs to be adopted and executed effectively. Our university libraries (as a colleague of mine has suggested) do not (each and every one of them) have to buy copies of the same books. They can buy different books and open their holdings to their users. Each library in fact may want to specialise in buying certain books more than others. This is done elsewhere in the world, and we can do it. And what applies to university libraries can apply to school libraries and to public libraries.

3. Such libraries (university, school, or public) need to open up more to the general public. When I was in Pasadena, California a couple of years ago, I needed to check out books from the Pasadena Community College Library; all I needed was the driver's licence of a friend of mine (my U.S. licence had expired) who was not a student at the college but a California resident. I checked out 10 books for three weeks. We need to open our library holdings (especially those at schools and universities to the public). This way we shoot two birds in one stone: make access to books easier and strengthen relations between the educational institution and the community at large.

4. We need a better system or mechanism for circulating used books from individuals who have bought the books and no longer need them to others. In many parts of the world (in ours to a lesser extent), used-book stores (like used-clothes stores) have been increasing. We are in need of one or two large-scale used-book stores in the capital Amman and one or two in other big and small cities and towns. I know that some bookshops in our part of the world already deal with used books, but the task needs to be taken more seriously. Again we could shoot two birds in one stone: do business and do service to others. Private individuals who own books which they do not need are called upon to donate these books and make them available to others.

5. While we appreciate the big role the public libraries are playing in making books available free of charge, there is a need to increase the number of these libraries. How many public libraries are there in Amman? One or two or three is not enough. And there is a need for libraries in other Jordanian towns and cities.

I believe that access to books as an issue in our society (as in the world at large) has to be taken a lot more seriously now that limitations to access (primarily financial and managerial) have become more serious. Books remain to date, in the words of the Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi, perhaps our "best companions."

Washington Watch

By Dr. James J. Zogby

What we learned in Lebanon and Syria

OUR JUST completed week-long congressional visit to Lebanon and Syria was significant for a number of reasons.

The bipartisan delegation of two Democrats (U.S. Representatives Nick J. Rahall II of West Virginia and Maurice Hinchey of New York) and two Republicans (U.S. Representatives Dana Rohrabacher of California and Ray LaHood of Illinois) was sponsored by the Arab American Institute (AAI) and the National Arab American Business Association (NAABA).

Despite the importance of such sponsored visits to the region, Arab Americans have not hosted this type of delegation in the past. American Jews, on the other hand, regularly sponsor pilgrimages to Israel of congresspeople and hundreds of other elected officials. The value of these visits can hardly be overestimated. Firstly, they provide congresspeople with first-hand, personal encounters with the political leadership of the region. In the two-way exchange, ideas are shaped on both sides. On this trip, for example, we observed how the visiting congressmen had stereotypes challenged and how their understanding of legitimate Arab concerns grew with each new encounter.

On the other hand, we noted how necessary such visits can be for both Lebanese and Syrians since, despite their need to be understood by American officials, they have had limited opportunities to make their cases in the past.

In fact, if we learned anything during this visit, it was that despite a compelling desire and need to communicate with the United States, how little some leaders and opinion makers in both countries understood about how the American system works. This in turn has had an impact on how effectively they have been able to make their case to elected U.S. representatives.

Americans, for example, are problem solvers. For the most part, they like to deal with the present and the future. If a problem exists, their concern is with a solution and not the deep history of its origins. One congressman, for example, became immediately convinced of the need to end the Israeli occupation of the south of Lebanon. However, he had heard repeatedly from the pro-Israeli lobby in the United States the argument that Israel occupied the south for defensive purposes. In a meeting with a group of Lebanese parliamentarians representing the resistance in the south, he attempted to get an answer to the questions: "Can I go back home and tell Congress that we insist that Israel withdraw without conditions from Lebanon, that there will be no future attacks on Israel following the withdrawal?" Now, it was to be expected that such a question would elicit some expression of Lebanese anger. It was clear that the Lebanese needed to establish, for the record, how much they had suffered from the occupation and provide some explanation of their suspicion about Israel's real intentions in Lebanon. What was not helpful was a half-hour lecture on the history of Zionism beginning with the Basel

Conference in 1897. I am not questioning the integrity or the intelligence of the Lebanese representative in question (he clearly was an honest and learned man). What the episode pointed out, however, was how deep is the gap in understanding between our two societies and, therefore, how necessary are more regular exchanges so that we can learn to better communicate with each other.

The two leaders who made the most lasting impressions with the congressional visitors were the Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, and the Syrian president, Hafez Al Assad. The meeting with Mr.

A solidly crafted and well-executed public relations campaign would be well-worth the expense. It would transform Lebanon's image and enhance its political, business, and even touristic standing in the United States.

Assad was extraordinary. He displayed a degree of humour and charm the congressmen had not expected. In fact, they remarked that the Syrian president was virtually unknown in the United States and their image of him was one that had been created by his opponents. It was this observation that led to a recommendation we made to both Prime Minister Hariri in Beirut and President Assad in Damascus.

While visits such as this one can be critically important, there is no substitute for regular communication. Public opinion and the policy debate in the United States are shaped by an ongoing pro-Israel and anti-Arab information campaign. In this effort, the Israeli government, their embassy in Washington, and their many supporters in the United States cooperate. What helps them is that their efforts are virtually uncontested. This year, for example, Israel, its government and non-governmental organisations, and its allies in the United States, will spend tens of millions in mas-

sive public relations effort designed not only to sway public opinion, but to shape negative attitudes about the Arabs. In contrast, the principal countries facing Israel will spend next to nothing.

This is a reflection of an attitude we repeatedly encountered on our visit: i.e. the Arab assumption that if your cause is just, you need not engage in public relations to sell it. In fact, the opposite is true. Public relations and idea campaigns are critical to the Arab side, precisely because the pro-Israeli side has so distorted the U.S. policy debate with misinformation. The Israeli prime minister makes himself available every week for U.S. television — rarely do Arab leaders "pitch" their availability and all too often invitations by the networks are refused. When Israeli leaders visit the United States — and they do so with great frequency — they visit many U.S. cities and make extensive appearances at each stop. Arab leaders, on the other hand, visit Washington and possibly New York and limit their exposure to official meetings.

When the Israeli image is tarnished, they fund advertising campaigns and public relations efforts to rehabilitate their public standing. The Lebanese, on the other hand, seem unaware of the urgent need to rehabilitate their tarnished image in the West. After 17 years of war, Lebanon, in the mind of most Americans, has become identified with civil war, hostages, the bombings of the Marine barracks and the U.S. embassy. In public opinion polls, Lebanon has sunk to a low of only 21 per cent positive rating. This can easily be turned around, but it will take work. A solidly crafted and well-executed public relations campaign would be well-worth the expense. It would transform Lebanon's image and enhance its political, business, and even touristic standing in the United States.

The congressmen urged Lebanon to undertake such a campaign, just as they urged Syria's president to be more available to the U.S. press — even buying television time if necessary to broadcast a message directly to the American and Israeli people. They were so overcome by President Assad's commitment to peace and to better relations with the United States that they urged him to speak out more often and more directly.

When the Syrian president told the members of the Congress: "We (the Syrian government) and the people of Israel who want peace, form one front," they were convinced that this message, like so much else that they heard and saw on this trip, deserved a wider audience in the United States.

Visits like the one we organised are important not only because congresspeople need direct exposure to Arab leaders. What is also to be learned from such encounters is how much we need to learn from each other — and how much more seriously the Arab World needs to take its responsibility to understand and communicate with public opinion in the United States.

LETTERS

Wrong figures

To the Editor:

I REFER to the report regarding HRH Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud joining a group of Jordanian and Arab investors in the creation of the proposed Business Tourism Investment Co. Ltd (Jordan Times, Dec. 13, 1997). It pains me that your highly regarded newspaper allows an article to appear without the slightest hint of editing.

Even the figures do not make sense. How can a JD1 million company undertake the development of a complete tourist resort? How can we fit so many hotels, with 3,000 rooms, employing 8,000 people, on a small plot of land not exceeding 25,000 square metres? To top it all, how can a JD1 million company achieve an annual profit of \$1 billion?

These are questions that any editor should raise before passing an article. If all reporting is conducted in such a manner, I shudder to think of all those poor souls that rely on reported information for their short-term investment decisions.

The Jordan Times had already reported about the project in an earlier story by Ms. Nadia Mukhlis that was published on Sunday, December 21, 1997. The project was also the subject of an information memorandum. Ms. Mukhlis and Mr. Qadmani who wrote the Dec. 13 article already have a copy of this document.

Quoting an Arthur Andersen study with these wrong figures creates a libellous situation for both the Jordan Times and ourselves.

I trust that the Jordan Times will print a retraction of the article in question. The new article should mention this fact.

Bassam Maayeh,
 Managing Director,
 Business Tourism
 Company,
 Amman.

The Jordan Times apologises for the errors made in reporting the story to which Mr. Maayeh refers in his letter. A correction has already been posted regarding them. It appeared in yesterday's issue of the Jordan Times.

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Society on the move

Ambassadorial and department changes in government precede touted cabinet reshuffle

New faces, old names appear on the scene as 1998 promises 'eventful year'

SOME LEAVE, OTHERS JOIN: This week the Cabinet announced the appointments of three new ambassadors and a new director general for the Department of Palestinian Affairs at the Foreign Ministry.

The three new envoys are: Mohammad Saqqaf, former Royal Court adviser; Major General Amr Al Hmoud from the General Intelligence Department (GID) and Major General Hmoud Al Qatameh, former head of the army's Fifth Armoured Division.

In the process, the resignation of Ali Maher Al Nashashibi, who recently reached the rank of ambassador after serving at the Jordanian embassy in Paris for several years, was also announced.

Iraq-educated Mr. Saqqaf, who held several senior posts, including minister of industry, trade and supply, is among the leading candidates to fill the dual post of ambassador to Egypt and Jordan's permanent representative to the Cairo-based Arab League. Both seats have been vacant since November, when His Majesty King Hussein appointed Mr. Nayef Al Qadi as member in the Upper House of Parliament (Senate). Mr. Saqqaf's strong economic background will enable him to oversee and expand trade links between Cairo and Amman. His last post was special adviser to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Mr. Hmoud, who hails from a prominent family of politicians, is now clearing his desk after a 27-year tenure at the GID. The father of three, who obtained his masters degree in political science from the University of Bombay in India, served as adviser at the Jordanian missions in Iraq and Turkey in the last several years. Mr. Hmoud, in his 40s, is a key member in Jordan's polo team, led by Crown Prince Hassan. He was a driving force behind the establishment of a polo field in Aqaba and earned Jordan several polo medals in games across the globe.

Mr. Qatameh, a father of eight, holds a masters degree in administrative and military sciences and has attended seven military courses in the United States, Germany and Britain throughout his army career. Born in 1946, he is likely to head Jordan's mission in Iraq, vacant since September, when his army colleague, Ambassador Bassam Qaqish, ended his tour of duty.

Dr. Ibrahim Badran was appointed as head of the Department for Palestinian Affairs to replace Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Al Tarshih, who resigned. Dr. Badran, who served as coordinator of Jordan's peace delegations, has held several senior private and public sector posts including secretary general at the Ministry of Energy and executive director at Noor Al Hussein Foundation. Maj. Gen. Tarshih resigned from the GID two years ago and has since been at the head of the department that deals with day-to-day issues of over 650,000 Palestinians displaced from the West Bank to Jordan during the 1967 war. The department also liaises with UNRWA, the U.N. agency looking after Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

PROMOTIONS AT CROWN PRINCE'S OFFICE: In the office of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, two women who have worked there for years on secondment from the Ministry of Education and the Royal Scientific Society, were promoted and appointed at the Royal Court by a Royal Decree. Both Hajia Dia Al Attia and Khadijah Siraj Tel received a special rank — the second highest in the Royal Court's employment scale.

Mrs. Attia, seconded to the Crown Prince's office 21 years ago, was appointed as assistant director for educational affairs. A mother of three who has been married for 14 years, Mrs. Attia holds a bachelors degree in English language and a diploma in teaching from the American University of Beirut. In 1994, she became education adviser to Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath El Hassan.

Apart from her Royal Court job, Mrs. Attia is heavily involved with the International Baccalaureate Organisation. She is member of the IB executive committee, an IB regional representative and a board member at the Amman Baccalaureate School.

Her colleague, Mrs. Tel, who has been working at the Crown Prince's office for 23 years, was appointed assistant director for social and charity affairs. Mrs. Tel, who holds a BA in English literature from the University of Jordan, is also on the executive committee of the Young Muslim Women Association in Jordan.

HATS UP FOR ID: The Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, founded in 1994, is set to reap more fruits in its efforts to upgrade the performance and effectiveness of Jordanian diplomats and other private and public sector personnel involved in international relations and external communications.

The first batch of 43 fellows enrolled at the ID's 15-month Higher Diploma Programme in Diplomacy and Foreign Service will graduate Sunday.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, chairman of the ID's board of directors, is expected to hand the graduates their certificates and invite them to an iftar banquet to celebrate the occasion. The fellows — including six women — hold bachelor of arts and masters degrees in social sciences. They were delegated by the ministries of foreign affairs, higher education, planning and information and from the army, the Public Security Department and the Investment Promotion Corporation. The ID plans to start its Masters Programme in Diplomatic Studies in 1998.

DEFYING SNOW: ID Director General Kamel Abu Jaber and a group of Jordanian politicians and intellectuals defied snowy weather conditions to meet with two French parliamentarians and a prominent journalist who accompanied French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine on his visit to Jordan on Monday.

The French delegation included Mr. Claude Estier, chairman of the Socialist Group at the Senate, Senator of Paris, Mr. Gerard Bapi, Socialist deputy of Haute Garonne, president of the Friendship Group France-Liban and France-Jordan and Mr. Jean Lucouture, a leading journalist and author of tens of books.

Attending the meeting was former Senator Abdullah Salah, who briefed them on Jordan's socio-economic policies and its stand vis-a-vis the current stalemate in the Middle East peace process.

JARRAR ENRAGES SOME: Jordan Television's leading anchorman Basharr Jarrar appears to have enraged many viewers during Monday's main Arabic news bulletin with his relentless efforts to "silence" Abdul Wahab Darawsheh, an Arab-Israeli Knesset (parliament) member who used harsh words to criticise Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Darawsheh, in a live telephone interview, apparently took Mr. Jarrar by surprise when he began heaping scorn on Mr. Netanyahu, accusing him of lying to all the Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs and to the United States and the world. According to columnist Saleh Qallab, the visibly confused Jarrar, who telephoned Darawsheh to get his reaction to Knesset's knife-edge passage of Israel's 1998 budget, resorted to every possible skill to interrupt the guest speaker, a renowned critic of Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Qallab, who writes for the Arab Al Yawm Arabic-language daily, criticised Mr. Jarrar and the country's "unclear" official media policy.

"The anchor misrepresented Jordan Television and our country and burdened us with a stand that does not belong to us," he wrote on Wednesday. "As the news bulletin is broadcast

simultaneously to the world via Jordan Television's satellite station, we appeared in the eyes of the Arab World and the world at large as being more keen on protecting the image of the Israeli prime minister than his subjects are," he said.

MABROOK ZGHEILAT: Abdul Wahab Zgheilati, Al Ra'i's deputy editor for the last two years, has been appointed chief editor as of Jan. 14. Mr. Zgheilati takes the editorial powers of Suleiman Qudah, who retains his position as responsible editor. Born in A' near Karak in 1953, Mr. Zgheilati joined Al Ra'i in 1972 as a typesetter.

With persistence and dedication, he climbed the ladder of journalism, moving up from the printing shop to become sub-editor, managing editor and deputy editor. Mr. Zgheilati has travelled extensively and has covered many Arab and Islamic summits. For years, Mr. Zgheilati, Mr. Qudah and Al Ra'i colleagues strove to keep the paper as Jordan's news leader.

Mr. Mahmoud Al Kayed remains chairman of the board of directors of the Jordan Press Foundation and head of the Editorial Board. The foundation publishes Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times.

Mr. Zgheilati is married and has five children.

BATAYNEH FACES TOUGH CLIMB: Former Health Minister Aref Batayneh is one of seven candidates seeking to replace Hiroshi Nakajima, director general of the Geneva-based World Health Organisation (WHO).

Armed with full backing from the 21-member Arab League, which set aside political differences plaguing it for years, Dr. Batayneh, a British-educated gynaecologist, left for Geneva this week to prepare for the tough Jan. 19 race. However, some observers believe he faces tough competition since six other candidates, including the former Norwegian prime minister, are vying for the post.

Sources close to Dr. Batayneh say his chances of winning the post would have been greatly boosted had the government taken a more active role in supporting his drive and campaigning more strongly for him.

One says that Dr. Batayneh used personal funds to finance his bid to reach the helm of the WHO. He also had to buy his plane ticket and is shouldering the cost of accommodation in Geneva, one of the most expensive cities in the world.

"It appeared to be a golden chance as he was the Arab League's sole candidate and his success would have been the first for any Arab to reach that post," said one source. "But had he received proper support from the government, his chances of winning would have looked much better."

Dr. Batayneh was nominated to the post while serving as health minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti that was replaced in March. Dr. Batayneh, former director general of the Royal Medical Services and head of the King Hussein Medical Centre, became health minister in 1994. He is married with four children.

JORDANIANS, PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS ON STAGE: Jordanians, Israelis and Palestinians are taking part in a new play showing at the InterContinental Hotel after iftar banquets for the next two weeks.



"El Bab El Ali," or the last night of Daher Al Omar — a powerful leader who ruled over Acre and the surrounding countryside in the 18th century — is written by renowned Jordanian playwright and comedian Hisham Yanis. It is the first regional theatre production of its kind financed by the European Commission to promote cross-cultural understanding and inter-faith dialogue as an important means to bringing people together.

In the play, Sheikh Daher, aided by his life-long counsellor and friend Ibrahim, a Jewish physician, seeks to liberate the entire Galilee from Ottoman rule and create an independent state where Muslims, Christians and Jews can live in peace. But greed and self-interest combine to thwart his dreams of peaceful co-existence and his soldiers eventually assassinate him.

The production opened in Haifa on Oct. 23 and has toured Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas for the last two months.

AMMAN TO HOST ORBIT FESTIVAL: Orbit Satellite and Radio Network will hold its highly acclaimed Orbit Annual Festival of Arabic Song in Amman later this month to mark 'Eid Al Fitr' celebrations when Muslims end their 30-day fasting.

The festival, the largest and most significant musical entertainment event of the year, has attracted many famed Arab singers such as Wanda Al Gazairiyah, Jordan's Royal Cultural Centre will host the event.

Orbit productions General Manager Robert Khalil said: "The choice of Jordan was primarily driven by its existing recognised stature involving cultural events and by the long-established cordial working relationship with Jordan TV."

Orbit's first and second festivals were held in Dubai and Beirut with thousands of Arabs travelling to attend the gala opening.

MUASHER PROMISES HELP: Jordan's Ambassador to Washington Marwan Muasher flew to Los Angeles last weekend to meet with the Jordanian community, many of its societies are bedevilled by personal rivalries. During a luncheon hosted by Jordanian Honorary Consul Kamel Ayyoub, over 50 dignitaries asked Dr. Muasher to help facilitate the process of renewing Jordanian passports from Washington via the Internet.

Mr. Ayyoub said Dr. Muasher was both receptive and supportive. "I do not want any Jordanian to travel to Washington to sign a power of attorney (to be able to renew his passport), to incur any financial expenses or to waste their time," Dr. Muasher was quoted as telling them. The community is keeping their fingers crossed, hoping that their honorary consulate will help cut the red tape.

NEW MAIL ORDER: Good news goes to all of you who keep getting wrong mail at their post office boxes, currently the only reliable mail distribution centres in the Kingdom. The government says it is looking into plans to introduce a "personal postal address system" — using the addressees' home or flat number, name of the street, area and city.

Minister of Transport Bassam Saket last week chaired a meeting that looked into modalities and decided to ask all local government to advise the commission on how such a system could be implemented.

APOLOGIES: Last but not least, an apology is due to all those of you who received copies of the Jordan Times with an inverted advertisement on page 8 yesterday. The management assures us that only a limited number of copies reached the market as the error was detected early during the printing process, but not early enough.

Rana Sabbagh

Are you sitting comfortably?

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE VIDEO CD (V-CD) is the latest gadget in the world of personal computers. The media has the same shape and size of a regular laser CD-ROM disk but it contains a motion film. It actually takes two V-CDs to hold one full-length film. The two disks are usually packaged together in one CD jewel box. As any digital device, the V-CD presents the advantage of quality playback. The extended shelf-life, and the convenience of sophisticated image control. The disk will let you enjoy superb quality stereo sound and better-than-TV image. As long as you manipulate it carefully and store it in a dry, cool place it may last a lifetime ... and more. Image control includes features like moving instantly, forward and backward, to any position in the film, freezing on any image, selecting a section to playback in slow motion or in a loop, zooming in and out, etc.

However, once you've bought or rented your first V-CD and you've been past the first excitement you start wondering if it makes much sense watching a film on a PC's monitor. First of all the V-CD won't really playback with satisfactory performance on any PC. The computer must be fast and should have a lot of memory, an advanced CD-ROM drive, a high-end sound card, hi-fi stereo speakers, an expensive screen controller card and, obviously, a high quality screen.

If you're already the lucky owner of such a machine, it would be at least a Pentium 166MMX CPU with 32MB of memory, 16x CD-ROM and a 17" high resolution monitor, and would cost JD2,000 or more. The V-CD is

designed to give optimum image quality when the size of the image is only about one-fourth of the screen. It is impossible to enjoy watching a movie with such a tiny image. One can always expand the image and stretch it to fill the screen. Viewing quality is then significantly reduced and becomes equivalent to that of a very good video tape copy.

The main difference remains the sound, which is not affected by any setting and is always excellent.

The feasibility of watching movies using a computer is not really about the cost of the equipment, it is rather about the "comfort" side. A good part of the pleasure of watching a movie comes from the atmosphere — how comfortably you are seated, who are you sharing the viewing with, remote control in your hand, etc. A computer environment doesn't usually provide such a setup. Typically you would have the PC on a desk and there would hardly be room for more than two people to sit next to each other and still have a good sight of what's being shown on the monitor.

Some manufacturers have already addressed the problem. They supply a dedicated player for V-CDs. These machines cost about half the price of a computer's 17" screen and they connect directly to a TV set. Just make sure you have a good pair of stereo speakers attached to your TV to enjoy the superior quality of the sound, and ... who needs a computer?

chip talk



Arafat warns if peace process fails 'all options will be open'

(Continued from page 1)

his refusal to implement honestly and accurately what has been agreed upon in the White House.

He added that among the thorny issues that prevent the peace process from moving forward were Israeli government policies of land confiscation, settlement building, delay in releasing Palestinian detainees and the procrastination to open sea and air ports in the Gaza Strip.

Dr. Majali meanwhile said that King Hussein has informed "the whole world that the peace process with our Palestinian brethren has reached a dangerous stage."

"The United States and the West have to show a serious stand and find a solution that would push the peace process ahead or the whole region will be

facing danger," Dr. Majali said.

Mr. Arafat said that he agreed with King Hussein on the "ways to step up the Arab positions against the challenges we are facing from the Israeli side."

A government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the Palestinian side asked King Hussein to be "actively" involved and push for a breakthrough in the peace process. During his two-day visit to the Kingdom, the Palestinian leader also discussed bilateral ties and ways to reactivate the work of the committees that were formed following Dr. Majali's visit to the West Bank in December.

The source said that Mr. Arafat and Dr. Majali discussed upgrading of King Hussein Bridge, which links the east and west banks to enable it to handle the influx of visitors from the two

sides.

He said that the two officials discussed a Japanese proposal to replace the wooden bridge.

The official was referring to a Japanese government proposal to expand the bridge's traffic and passengers capacity. But Tokyo insists that before renovation work starts, Israel and the Palestinians should determine who would control the western part of the bridge, which is currently run by Israel.

The government source also said that Palestinian and Jordanian officials also discussed the transportation of goods between Jordan and the self-rule areas.

Among other things that were discussed was the upcoming meeting of Waqf officials of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Jordan. No date was fixed for the meeting, the official said.

Abbadi, Dughmi lash out at government policies

(Continued from page 1)

"The closure of newspapers and the gagging of mouths will not lead to submission ... but to explosion."

Meanwhile, Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi, former justice minister in the Kabariti cabinet, along with other deputies questioned the government on the effectiveness of its economic reform programme.

"The economic team has focused its full attention on the implementation of the economic reform programme rather than on comprehensive sectoral reform. It did not take the

humanitarian aspect on the national economic agenda, creating a state whereby the national economy has been converted into a guided economy, rather than an economy which is endowed with free will," Mr. Dughmi said. Jordan launched an International Monetary Fund-agreed economic reform programme in 1989 after a major financial crisis rocked the country leading to the devaluation of the dinar. Though the programme was side-tracked by the 1990 Gulf crisis, it has enabled the Kingdom to reduce its budget and balance of payments deficit,

narrow inflation and prepare Jordan to enter the global market economy.

Mr. Dughmi, who spoke on behalf of the 13-member Parliamentary Alliance Bloc, also shed doubt on the efficiency of the Social Security Package.

"It is only a three-year programme, and the next seven years depend on finding high-interest foreign loans. The programme's implementation is not certain, and it only solves part of the problem," he said.

Mr. Dughmi, as well as other deputies, criticised the government over its public administration reform

drive.

"Government appointments, retirements and transfers which are carried out under the excuse of implementing administrative reform, are in reality cases of nepotism. This trend tends to destabilise the administration, which in turn leads to loss of public confidence in the government," Mr. Dughmi said.

The escalating rates of poverty and unemployment remained the overriding concern of most, if not all, the 16 deputies who spoke during yesterday's session.

"Poverty and unemployment are two phenomena

that should be battled with firm and full determination: especially since they have been intensifying in the last few years," Deputy Adnan Agrabawi said.

The draft 1998 state budget amounts to JD 1.95 billion, 5.7 per cent higher than last year's, with total expenditures estimated at JD 1.87 billion and deficit at JD 37 million.

The House, already behind schedule, has to approve the bill before the end of this month to enable the government to start disbursing this year's allocations.

(Continued from page 1)

The text also recalls a statement adopted on Oct. 29 "in which the Council condemned the decision of the government of Iraq to try to dictate the terms of its compliance with its obligations to cooperate within the Special Commission."

The October statement also warned of "serious consequences" if Iraq failed to provide full and unconditional access to the U.N. inspectors charged with verifying the elimination of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Washington had sought a strong condemnation of Iraq, but the text was watered down amid reservations notably from Russia.

Iraq says the teams are dominated by nationals of Britain and the U.S., the two Security Council members most opposed to the lifting of U.N. sanctions against Baghdad.

Baghdad also accuses Mr. Ritter, who served in the U.S. Marines during the 1991 Gulf war which ousted Iraq from Kuwait, of spying for the United States.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Wednesday accused the U.S. and Britain of manipulating the U.N. Special Commission charged with dismantling Iraq, and condemned the situation as "unacceptable."

"The team is almost wholly Anglo-Saxon, this is not acceptable. It is scandalous," Mr. Aziz

told a press conference here.

"The fact that they send such a team shows the complete domination of the U.S. and the British. This biased policy should change," he said.

"What we are asking for is that there should be real international composition" of inspection teams, said Mr. Aziz.

The Iraqi body charged with liaising with UNSCOM on Wednesday refused to cooperate with Mr. Ritter.

Mr. Aziz said that Mr. Ritter was an agent for the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and would not be allowed to continue his work as long as the composition of his inspection team remained "unbalanced."

Jordanian industrialists to seek higher volume of trade during visit to Iraq next week

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A group of industrialists will head for Baghdad Saturday hoping to enhance economic and trade relations in preparation for the finalisation of the annual trade protocol expected to be signed soon.

Under the 1997 protocol, Jordan supplied Iraq with U.N. authorised goods and services worth \$255 million. Iraq wants to expand the agreement this year.

According to an official source, who requested anonymity, Jordan is expected to increase the protocol to \$300 million.

The source, however, said, "the final figure will depend on the outcome of a meeting between the trade ministers of the two countries soon."

Jordan is reluctant to expand the trade protocol because it might swell the Baghdad's debts to the Kingdom.

But Jordan's private sector has been pushing for an

expansion of the protocol to include more commodities outside a separate U.N.-Iraq oil-for-food deal.

Many Jordanian traders have long criticised tough Jordanian enforcement of U.N. sanctions on Iraq, saying they were unable to sell commodities, originally made for the Iraqi market, in other countries.

"Jordanian industrialists hope to export to Iraq products that are not included in the trade protocol," the source said.

Other sources hope the visit would also bring about joint investments.

Meanwhile, business sources say Baghdad wants Jordan to buy its needs of barley, maize and sulphur from the Iraqi market. But they say this could not happen without permission from the United Nations.

U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 have banned all Iraqi exports and allowed Baghdad to import a limited list of food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies.

But the U.N. allowed Jordan to continue receiving oil supplies from Iraq because Amman had no other source of supply at concessionary terms.

Jordan and Iraq last month concluded a deal on the sale of 4.8 million tonnes of Iraqi oil and oil products to Jordan for 1998 at a reduced price.

According to an agreement signed in Baghdad, Jordan will buy its crude oil in 1998 at \$16.8 per barrel, down from \$19.15 in 1997.

Under the new agreement, Iraq will also give Jordan \$300 million in oil supplies this year in payment of an old debt, as it did in 1997.

The U.N. committee monitoring sanctions has last month approved 25 new contracts worth \$31 million in Jordanian exports to Iraq under the limited oil-for-food agreement.

The overall value of approved contracts stands at \$173 million.

Aqaba port earns JD40m in 1997

By Issam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Port of Aqaba earned about JD40 million during 1997 and the port is prepared to handle increased activity during 1998. Ports Corporation Director General Mohammad Dalabeh told the Jordan Times Tuesday.

Describing the results in 1997 as satisfactory, Captain Dalabeh expected the activity to grow in light of contracts and the higher volume of projects and increased investments expected in Aqaba in the near future.

Capt. Dalabeh said that sufficient positive indicators were detected to confirm that the handling volume at the port will reach the required volume this year.

He added that plans to increase the efficiency of handling are being implemented and that equipment and machinery have been modernised and increased in number to maintain a high level of discharging, equivalent to international standards and even better than neighbouring ports.

The director general referred to figures to verify the activity at the port. He noted that a total of 2,997 vessels docked at Aqaba last year compared to 2,735 vessels in 1996.

He also indicated that although the activity of vessels increased by 10 per cent, the number of passengers declined from 1.1 million in 1996 to 860,000 passengers in 1997. He attributed the drop to the opening of new lines and other ports for passengers on the Red Sea. As for the movement of goods, a total of 12.3 million tonnes were handled in 1997 compared to 12 million in 1996. He noted that imports increased by four per cent and exports by two per cent.

As for Jordan's national exports, Captain Dalabeh said that phosphate exports remained about the same in both 1996 and 1997 whereas the volume of fertiliser exports went up from 673,000 tonnes in 1996 to 723,000 tonnes in 1997.

Potash exports declined by 15 per cent as it dropped from 1.7 million tonnes in 1996 to 1.4 million tonnes in 1997.

Other goods increased from 620,000 tonnes in 1996 to 985,000 tonnes in 1997. The increase included containers which went up by nine per cent from 139,000 containers to 152,000.

Loading in trucks in 1997 amounted to 4.4 million tonnes transported by 218,300 trucks compared to 3.4 million tonnes transported by 196,500 trucks.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Today you might find a way to contribute to others. You do best in a job that includes service. You may not have thought of yourself as a servant, but the best leaders do; it's a good skill to acquire. Don't travel late tonight. The possibility of a breakdown is better than 50-50.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) From now through Saturday, you'll be luckier than usual. It's a fine time for romance and travel, with the emphasis on romance. If you can take today and tomorrow off work, do so. Give them the excuse that you have to go on a second honeymoon, or a first one, whichever is appropriate.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The gang could show up your house, so get busy. There should be time to pick up supplies. Don't expect much help from your partner. You'll have to do a lot of the work. Don't plan a late evening, either. It looks like your mate will start getting grumpy tonight. Get rid of the company before that happens.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) This is a good day to learn, and there's plenty of information coming in. All you need to do is organise and memorise it. That's not as easy as it sounds, but it is possible. You have a natural talent for putting things in order. You could have a very productive and educational day.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's money coming into your account today. You've worked yourself to a frazzle with the promise of riches to come. And now they're starting to show up. You might get more promises than money right now, but that's only temporary. These people will be good on their promises and you'll see the benefits by tomorrow.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You'll be busy talking to friends and associates during most of the day. Your communications will be effective and you'll get a lot done. There's a hassle tonight when a surprise wrecks your plans. Don't worry. You and your sweetheart will finally have time to be together, and that's the most important thing.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Have you been wondering what your life's purpose is? You might figure it out today. There's information coming in that helps you put the puzzle together. Part of your purpose may have to do with getting organised. If you set priorities, you'll be able to accomplish more in one lifetime than you would otherwise.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Meet with your group this morning. Although you start out with a big problem, you'll end up as a cohesive unit. The trick is to find the best job for each individual. If you do that this afternoon, you'll have a group that cannot only handle big projects, but have a great time while they're at it.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There will be a test this afternoon. An older person will ask you to repeat everything you've learned. Rote memorisation has taken a bad rap lately, but it's a handy skill to acquire. The challenge, of course, is to have the right answer. You should know what that is without too much effort.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It's a marvellous day to travel, and it looks like you could get away. That's unusual for a Thursday, but the conditions are right. It might not be travel in a physical sense. It might be intellectual. This is also a good afternoon to learn something difficult. If you can do either of those things, go for it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your financial matters must take precedence over everything today. It's also a good time to see if you have enough insurance. If you don't have any, call around and find a good deal. Basically, today you need to get complete on all the little leftover financial details in your life.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The sun is in Capricorn. The moon is in Virgo today, signalling partnerships. It's a good afternoon for a consultation with someone who's advising you in a legal matter, too. If there's anybody your life who's been giving you problems lately, this would be a good time to resolve the situation.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Conditions are excellent for travel to distant lands. If you can't travel right now, befriend a foreigner. You could get invited to this person's house when you visit. Offer some hospitality now, in trade. Meanwhile, don't step between friends who are fighting. You'll just get them both mad at you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You and a roommate may never see eye to eye. There's no virtue in hammering at each other. You could just call it quits. If you're married to each other, there's more at stake. Your best option is to wait. By tomorrow, the other person might see how sensible you are without your having to say a word.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Ask your friends or partner for help, and you can practice your management skills. It'll be more satisfying than doing it yourself. Besides, the more people you get involved, the bigger your project can be. Expect complications with travel this afternoon. If possible, put your trip off until next week.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Something you've been wanting is more fun than practical. Amazingly enough, you might be able to get an older person to spring for it. There's something just whimsical enough about it to close the sale. That could be the case if you're selling, too. People will be more likely to buy toys than practical items.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You know that to become an excellent leader you have to learn how to be an excellent follower. Today, that's going to be required. Otherwise, there would be a definite problem. You may want to take over the leadership role, but it's probably not a great idea quite yet. Your chance will come. Be patient.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) It's been a hectic week, with too much going on. You're trying to make contact with your sweetheart, but there are other things you have to do. The good news is that tomorrow will be better, and Friday should be great. Schedule your date for Thursday night or early Friday morning for maximum benefit.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A group effort will go well this morning. Make sure everyone gets along with each other. You're good at this job. Once you figure out what people need, you can make sure those needs are met. When that's done, the one you helped can take care of other people's need. Everybody wins in this equation.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Something you've done makes you look good to the boss early this morning. A project you were struggling with turned out pretty well. The people who pay you the money are just now finding out what it is. Don't let them talk you into staying late tonight, however. It looks like something at home needs your attention.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You need to know something that's a little bit outside the information you have at hand. There's stuff you know you don't know, like brain surgery. And then there's stuff you don't know that you don't know. And that's the area where you need coaching.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) People want to give you credit. Whether or not you want to accept is another question. You're pretty good at shopping, but sometimes you get too impatient. Only go into debt if you're getting a fabulous deal. And remember to include the interest rate on the purchase price.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Delegate some of your responsibilities to a person who has skills you lack. You two complement each other, but sometimes you can't understand each other at all. This person is a combination of your best friend and worst enemy. At any rate, he or she will be the one who solves the problem today, so work on it together.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) It may be necessary to spend money to make money. That's a difficult situation, but it's sometimes necessary. Finish a big job by quitting time and you'll save yourself a lot of trouble. Get together with dear friends and your sweetheart later. You'll need a place where you can talk freely, to let off steam.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Latin American business community fears tidal wave of Asian goods

Buenos Aires (AFP) — Asian goods made cheaper by the region's financial crisis threaten to swamp Latin American markets and run local producers out of business, executives warned Tuesday.

Strong currency devaluations in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea have sparked fears that suddenly cheaper Asian goods could undercut their Latin American competition.

Experts here have rushed to estimate the potential impact of a tidal wave of cheap Asian goods on the region's economies, including Brazil, Argentina and Peru.

Imports from Asia cost 17 per cent less on average than before the region's recent economic turmoil, according to a study by the Argentine Industrial Union (UIA), the country's largest business association.

European Union products have become an average of 6.9 per cent cheaper, but imports from North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) members Canada, Mexico and the United States

became 2.8 per cent more expensive on average, the study said.

And Argentine products have become one per cent more expensive than they were in the months preceding the "Asian Tiger" economies' severe economic woes, the UIA said.

Argentina's trade balance has begun to worry the government, which has estimated that the crisis may cost Argentina \$4.5 billion.

And the industrial association has expressed concern about the impact the swell of Asian goods will have on Brazil, the market for 30 per cent of Argentina's exports and the largest member of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), which also groups Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Should Brazil devalue its currency, the UIA said, it would cripple Argentina's economic progress since a 1991 stability initiative tying its peso to the U.S. dollar.

The UIA welcomed the government's decision to maintain a three per cent import tax, which is added to

the MERCOSUR customs union's agreed three per cent tax.

Argentina has appealed a World Trade Organisation (WTO) decision that the special tax is illegal based on a complaint brought by the United States.

In Peru, economists and business leaders warned Tuesday that the country's industrial base could collapse if the government allows cheaper Asian goods onto domestic markets.

It would be "national economic suicide" if the government reduces import tariffs before 2000 and in the wake of the Asian crisis, according to the Eduardo Farah, head of the influential National Association of Industries (SNI).

Farah said that Peruvian business will already suffer from cheaper Asian imports under the current import tax regime but "if we reduce the tariffs... it would be a catastrophe."

"If they decide to lower the tariffs, they should just tell industrialists to close their doors," Farah told the daily *Expresso de Lima*.

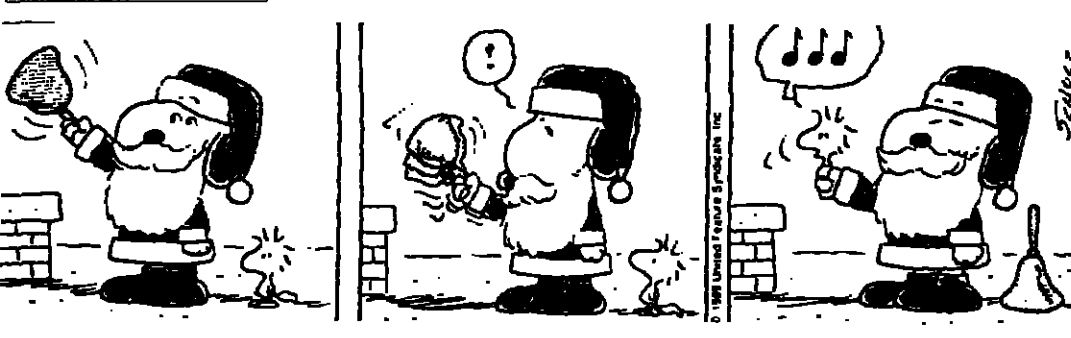
THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1 Use a scale
6 Medicores
10 Tolsky hero
14 Mongolian range
15 Norwegian saint
16 Roman tyrant
17 Small land mass
18 Stir up
19 Scotch shot
20 Ran about of the law
23 "the season to be jolly..."
24 Tie-toe tie
25 Hotelier Conrad
29 Stiff hairs
34 Above it all
35 Smile broadly
36 Literary collection
37 Knocked out
41 Night before
42 Ex-GIs
43 The... the Netherlands
44 In a tranquil manner
47 Crooner
48 N. African
49 Pipe residue
50 Ailing
59 Exploited laborer
60 Move like The Blob
61 Type of newspaper
62 Look after
63 Skin pH
64 Sgt. Bilko
65 Poetic works
66 Three-handed card game
67 Soft drinks

DOWN
1 Homeless child
2 Different
3 new fly
4 Highlander
5 Get along immediately
6 Categorizes
7 Spicy stew

8 Weapons talks, briefly
9 Worker's extra pay
10 Bring in as a member
11 Action word
12 Sea east of the Caspian
13 Alaska town
21 Anais the diarist
22 W. Hemisphere group
25 Land of the dead
26 Tom T. Hall hit
27 Bring down
28 Heavy weight
29 White or Ford
30 Vocalized team spirit
31 Chuckle
32 Boredom
33 Fills completely
35 Belgian composer
38 Outdoes
39 Pantomime game
40 Feedback tidbit
45 Rewrites
46 Also not
47 W.C.'s partner in comedies
49 Nest noise
50 As far as
51 Poverty
52 Accomplished
53 Curving golf shot
54 Pound of poetry
55 Source of poi
56 Posterior
57 Author/director
58 Cereal grasses

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RUPEN
CILRY
HINEAL
UPKAME

Answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: MERCY PAGAN COMMON CLUMSY
Answer: How the soldiers reacted to the rifle inspection - WITH OPEN ARMS

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan eyes investment funds fleeing South East Asian markets

**** JORDAN WILL** start a wide-ranging promotional campaign to highlight its industries and attract investments from South East Asia due to the economic turmoil in the countries of that region and the emergence of indications confirming the willingness of investment funds to shift investments to the Middle East, Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki said Monday. He added that he would lead an economic delegation to visit Thailand, China and other South East Asian states starting Saturday.

The visit aims primarily at presenting investment opportunities in Jordan to investment funds in that region. Dr. Mulki said the situation and present circumstances confirm that the time is suitable now for Jordan to stand as a competitor to attract investments, especially in industrial areas. The minister indicated that he would concentrate on promoting electronic and house appliance industries in addition to car assembly plants in order to gain partners and financiers for such projects.

Dr. Mulki said foreign investments last year have exceeded the \$300 million mark. The amount represented a 12 per cent increase over the foreign investments recorded in 1996. The minister expressed his belief that this year will

witness a big rise in foreign investments, especially from those in South East Asia which started to move out of that region.

Asked about industrial zones in the Kingdom, Dr. Mulki said the ministry has specified the types of industries that the industrial zones will be specialised in. As such, the industrial estates that will be set up in 1998 and 1999 will form in totality an integrated industrial bloc.

He explained that the Mafruj Industrial Estate has been assigned for food industries and the Irbid (Al Hassan) Industrial Estate for textile, clothing and carpet industries. The products from the latter will be designated for export to the United States free from customs.

Al Karak Industrial Estate was assigned for mechanical industries which will complement and support the potash industry. Chemical industries of all kinds, especially the cleaning and industrial chemical products, were assigned for the Al Hasa Industrial Estate.

Dr. Mulki concluded by revealing that preparations are underway to establish an industrial estate near the Queen Alia International Airport. This estate will be for "clean" industries, namely electronic industries that would concentrate on selling in outside markets (Al Dustour).

Fastlink sues government for 'breaching of agreement'

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's sole mobile phone service, Fastlink, is suing the government for last October's decision to grant a second cellular network licence to the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC).

The case, filed on Dec. 15, is now before the Higher Court of Justice, the only body entitled to rule on the legality of administrative decisions. The first session is scheduled for Jan. 24, legal sources said.

The court's verdict, which could annul the Council of Ministers' decision, is expected in four to six months, experts added.

On the verge of losing its monopoly, granted in Oct. 1994 for a four-year period, Fastlink is protesting that by announcing the decision before October 1998, the Council of Ministers "took away from us one year of the exclusivity which we were granted and for which we paid," Fastlink General Manager David Bosworth said.

For the four-year monopoly, Jordan Mobile Telecommunication Services (JMTS), Fastlink's operator, signed a JD24

million deal.

"We are very anxious to have competition because both users and companies are going to benefit from it, but we also want our rights to be respected," Mr. Bosworth stated.

Fastlink is protesting against both the timing and the manner of the Council of Ministers' decision to grant the JTC a mobile phone network licence.

According to the licence agreement between the JTC and Fastlink, Mr. Bosworth said, the issuance of a second licence could have been "considered" only after the expiration of Fastlink's four-year exclusivity period, at the end of October 1998.

But by announcing the decision on Oct. 19, 1997, "the government is breaching the agreement, and even if JTC's mobile network cannot be operational until October 1998, they [the JTC] can still start construction before then," Mr. Bosworth said.

In addition, he pointed out, the 1995 Telecommunications Law requires an open tender for the issuance of a second licence.

At the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), which

was also sued by Fastlink together with the Council of Ministers, officials responded that a tendering process was started, but it had to be frozen when JTC's privatisation process was launched.

In line with the privatisation process, started almost two years ago, the government is now looking for a strategic partner willing to buy 40 per cent of the JTC.

JTC's privatisation appears to be the main reason behind the government's decision to grant it a cellular network licence.

"It was thought that it would be easier to find a better quality partner if the JTC had a cellular network licence," TRC head Youssef Abu Jamous told the Jordan Times.

Referring not to venture into the dispute, he maintained that "any decision taken by the court will be implemented and respected."

Stating that relations between the TRC and Fastlink were "very close," Mr. Abu Jamous also said he still hoped for an "amicable solution."

"However, the TRC has not yet given the JTC a cellular network licence," he pointed out, but "con-

ditions and terms are still being discussed."

Particularly important among the conditions that the new operator will be required to meet, Mr. Abu Jamous stressed, is the equal treatment that the JTC, as interconnection provider, will have to grant Fastlink.

Interconnection fees for cellular phone calls (over 60 fils per minute, compared to the nine fils per minute for telephones) substantially affect Jordan's airtime rates, which are higher than those in other Middle Eastern countries such as Israel and Lebanon.

"One of our major concerns is that, being the interconnection provider, the JTC could offer lower airtime fees to its subscribers and charge us a disproportionately high interconnection fee," Mr. Bosworth said.

Excluding such a possibility, Mr. Abu Jamous, however, stressed the benefits that consumers will get from moving from a monopoly to a duopoly.

"Competition between the two operators will give subscribers better quality and cheaper fares," he said, adding that a decrease in prices has so far characterised

similar operations, especially paging services.

However, a major cost element in mobile phone services remains the 20 per cent share the government levies on the provider's gross operating income.

"That is a substantial amount," Mr. Abu Jamous commented, adding that it is up to the Ministry of Finance to decrease such a percentage.

"Achieving lower prices, in order to expand services and make them available to the largest possible segment of the population, is one of our main objectives," Mr. Abu Jamous continued, "and we will pursue this goal even if it means issuing a third licence."

According to the Council of Ministers' policy, a third telecommunications company could be licensed any time as long as it does not operate before January 2001.

Jordan's potential mobile phone services market is estimated by experts at around 150,000 subscribers in a duopoly.

According to company sources, Fastlink currently has around 42,000 subscribers, 20,000 of whom were added last year.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	MLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.5233	0.6138	0.4828	131.09	0.7068	1733.84	2.0642	6.4032
DE Mark	0.6588	1.0000	0.3364	0.2636	71.91	0.4366	1033.84	1.2171	3.3487
GB Sterling	1.6292	2.8701	1.0000	0.7763	163.33	0.7936	2034.55	2.3498	7.4619
CH Franc	0.6744	1.2250	0.4135	1.0000	88.38	0.8983	1208.16	1.3858	4.1146
JP Yen	0.0076	0.0139	0.0067	0.0058	1.0000	0.0079	11.68	0.0145	0.0374
CA Dollar	0.6982	1.2741	0.4333	0.3324	1.08	1.0000	1282.10	1.4353	4.2637
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0010	0.0004	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001	1.00	0.0001	0.0003
NL Guilder	0.4888	0.7273	0.2688	0.2100	63.75	0.6872	873.88	1.0000	2.8705
FR Franc	0.1638	0.2585	0.1005	0.0793	21.48	0.2348	533.84	1.3400	3.9012

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	SYP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7510	0.3770	0.3640	0.3061	3.6728	1622.00	3.4062
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2806	0.5317	0.5184	0.4317	5.1804	2163.74	4.9828
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.1880	1.0000	0.1005	0.0977	0.0816	0.98	407.08	0.9078
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	1.8806	3.9486	1.0000	0.9811	0.816	9.74	4050.40	9.0324
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1947	1.0302	1.0302	1.0000	0.816	1.01	419.38	0.9352
Kuwait Dinar	3.2688	2.3162	12.2542	1.2316	1.189	1.0000	12.00	4888.57	9.3382
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0213	1.0213	1.0000	0.816	1.01	419.38	0.9352
Lebanese 1000	0.65	0.4643	2.4655	0.2468	0.2468	0.2005	2.4053	1.0000	2.2300
Egyptian	0.2937	0.2082	1.1016	0.1107	0.1092	0.0889	1.0786	448.43	1.0000

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oil	Last	Previous	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	
Brent	15.10	15.14	SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4881	0.16384	0.33583	34.9604	
WTI	15.06	15.14	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4881	0.16384	0.33583	34.9604	
Bonny	15.10	15.14	KW Dinar	3.2688	5.8583	2.00821	4.84731	428.268	
Dubai	12.95	13.10	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.85793	1.62813	3.93701	347.705	
UL Gas	167.00	166.00	CY Pound	1.8634	3.397	1.4331	2.7844	244.198	

Metal Prices					Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Metal	Big	Offer	Period	1 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 12	1 - 3	3 - 6
Gold (oz's)	285	283.5	USD	5.50	5.53	5.53	5.59	5.55	5.55
Silver (oz's)	5.77	5.79	GBP	7.45	7.58	7.44	7.45	7.48	7.48
Platinum (oz's)	387.5	388.5	JPY	0.09	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.25	0.25
AL (3 Months)	1610	1613	DEM	3.88	3.43	3.83	3.88	3.87	3.87
CU (3 Months)	1725	1728	FRF	3.88	4.01	3.99	3.84	3.71	3.71
Zinc (3 Months)	1141	1144	CHF	1.09	1.21	1.24	1.34	1.89	1.89
Lead (3 Months)	542	544	ITL	6.18	6.06	6.00	6.50	6.33	6.33
NI (3 Months)	6720	6730							

Main Equity Indices					JOD Cross Rates				
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Chs		
New York	DOW JONES	7730.38	-1.75	-0.02	7750.31	7707.36	7847.18		
New York	S&P 500	861.67	-0.45	-0.05	864.09	848	862.12		
London	FT-SE 100	5106.9	23	0.45	5135.8	5094.9	5083.9		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15121.88	368.04	2.48	16148	14886.2	14755.9		
Paris	CAC 40	2919.8	16.87	0.58	2948.97	2906.28	2902.83		
Frankfurt	DAX	4188.08	30.58	0.74	4210.72	4182.49	4159.4		

Energy					JOD Cross Rates				
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell				
Coffee (c/lbs)	169.42	Spot	US Dollar	0.709	0.710				
Cocoa (c/lbs)	1671	Spot	GB Sterling	1.6181	1.6178				
Sugar (c/lbs)	296	Spot	DE Mark	0.3886	0.3884				
Wheat (c/lbs)	103	Spot	CH Franc	0.4787	0.4791				
Soys (c/lbs)	24.62	Spot	FR Franc	0.1154	0.116				
Tea (c/lbs)	168	Spot	JP Yen	0.5306	0.5413				
Barley (c/lbs)	0	Spot	NL Guilder	0.343	0.3447				
Rice (c/lbs)	370	Spot	IT Lira	0.383	0.385				

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTRE - AMMAN - JORDAN

TELEPHONE: 601711 / 601719

ORGANISED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 14/01/1998

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
346,000	250,000	ARAB BANK	14.9	1.24	6	180	58285	324.00	323.75	-25-
2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	9	4159	7507	1.82	1.80	-02-
3,540	1,600	BANK OF JORDAN	5.0	0.00	11	11493	16389	1.60	1.60	-
1,300	890	KID. EAST INV. BK.	65.7	0.00	3	3250	3250	1.00	1.00	-
2,480	650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	6.14	15	56300	95710	1.69	1.70	+01+
4,180	1,850	JOR. KID. BANK	10.7	0.00	1	700	7454	2.04	2.00	-04-
980	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.45	7	11200	7504	0.67	0.67	-
4,050	2,250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.1	4.03	21	9700	23113	2.38	2.38	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 230.96 %CHG: -0.13										
2,950	2,700	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.8	5.45	2	20000	55000	2.89	2.75	-14-
2,100	1,590	JOR. PNEUM. INSUR.	5.8	7.35	4	1750	3570	2.05	2.04	-01-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 121.06 %CHG: -1.57										
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	5	371	717	1.92	1.94	+02+
1,550	930	ARL. PORTFOLIO	2	0.00	2	1548	46603	3.05	3.01	-04-
1,590	1,150	KID. EAST INV. BK.	18.3	0.00	1	1000	1015	1.03	1.01	-02-
4,000	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.3	0.00	8	4950	19503	3.94	3.94	-
1,090	900	SARMA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	1500	1425	0.95	0.95	-
2,190	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.51	9	5250	8821	1.69	1.69	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 116.79 %CHG: +0.05										
1,160	930	ATTACHEES	9	0.00	2	2100	2436	1.16	1.16	-
4,050	2,450	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.3	3.45	2	1548	46603	3.05	3.01	-04-
7,050	5,680	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.1	3.30	1	5000	29000	5.85	5.85	-05-
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.40	8	1000	10544	10.55	10.58	+03+
4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	11.8	4.65	29	8824	37942	4.32	4.30	-02-
1,630	1,020	JOR. PIPE MANFACT.	16.0	4.20	7	64000	82560	1.29	1.29	-
6,000	4,400	DAM ALDANA DV. INV.	14.0	4.39	8	1308	7454	5.65	5.70	+05+
630	440	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	2	1000	455	0.46	0.46	-
1,230	700	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	6	55000	38500	0.70	0.70	-
710	510	NATIONAL INV.	9	0.00	3	1500	885	0.59	0.59	-
1,440	370	LIVERSED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	46	52750	26989	0.43	0.45	+02+
820	530	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDUS.	9	0.00	4	26242	16008	0.61	0.61	-
1,610	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.1	5.93	4	3200	3776	1.18	1.18	-
1,800	820	GRIV. MOON INDUS.	P	-25	21	46950	40377	0.87	0.86	-01-
1,410	590	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9.7	13.89	7	2100	1512	0.72	0.72	-
960	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	5	3000	80	0.90	0.90	-
1,200	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.9	0.00	1	8000	8080	1.03	1.01	-02-
810	710	JORDAN STEEL	33.0	6.85	5	2350	1716	0.73	0.73	-
840	570	KID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	40	132100	82840	0.61	0.64	+03+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 112.13 %CHG: -0.49										
GRAND TOTAL										
INDEX: 166.84 %CHG: -0.27										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 14/01/1998										
N	1,000	JOR. INT. INSURANCE CO	E	0.00	1	2150	2150	1.00	1.00	-
N	530	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	E	0.00	2	3000	1020	0.33	0.34	+01+
N	410	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.1	0.00	23	112600	41665	0.37	0.38	+01+
N	1,650	SARMA FOR INVESTMENT	82.7	0.00	3	500	606	1.20	1.26	+06+
N	660	UNION INV. SOC.	9	0.00	7	16500	2195	0.71	0.71	-
N	570	ARAB FTH. INVEST.	9	0.00	17	78400	39705	0.53	0.51	-02-
N	330	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	2	1500	240	0.17	0.16	-01-
N	650	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	1	2000	920	0.46	0.46	-
N	750	KATL. MOLT. IND. KANICO	9	0.00	3	1500	710	0.48	0.48	-
N	1,200	READY MIX CONCRETE	12.7	0.00	1	22000	22100	1.00	1.05	+05+
N	660	MIDEST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	6	5500	2535	0.64	0.64	-
N	730	SARMA PHARM.	E	0.00	2	300	208	0.71	0.70	-02-
N	830	INDUS. CERAMIC	15.2	0.00	2	378	219	0.58	0.58	-
N	850	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	E	0.00	1	50	57	0.77	0.73	-04-
N	820	KATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	3	4600	2530	0.56	0.55	-01-
N	1,100	720 ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	46.2	0.00	1	700	700	1.00	1.00	-
N	1,290	MUTRIDAR 75%	E	0.00	41	21202	21812	1.28	1.25	-03-
N	1,000	KIDAL PRINT CO. 75%	E	0.00	1	250	175	1.00	0.95	-05-
GRAND TOTAL										
119 266181 139526										

N: New 12 months low

S: Stock divided during the past 12 months

P: Listed during the past 12 months

E: P/E ratio is 100 or more

G: Negative P/E

Z: Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year

Al Jazireh to host West Asian basketball qualifiers

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's basketball champions, Al Jazireh, have been confirmed as hosts of the 1st West Asian Zone qualifiers which will be held here starting Feb. 23.

Six teams will be competing for the sole qualifying berth to the Asian Clubs Championship which will be held in Malaysia April 25-May 2.

The teams are Lebanon's Al Riyadi, Syria's Al Wihdeh, Yemen's Al Mina, Palestine's Al Quds, a team from Iran and Jordan's Al Jazireh.

According to the Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) West Asia Zone co-ordinator Awad Haddad, the Asian Clubs Championship will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: the top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones, and the host nation.

The ABC five zones are: Middle Asia, East Asia, West Asia, the Gulf and South West Asia.

Al Orthodoxy and Al Ahli had previously taken part in the championship with Al Ahli securing the best Jordanian showing with a fourth place finish in 1995.

Al Riyadi will probably be the strongest contender in the qualifiers, having two professionals in their lineups.

"We are training and hope to do well. We hope to be able to compete with the Syrian and Iranian teams, however, the Lebanese might stand the best chance," Al Jazireh's head coach Fadi Sabbah Wednesday told the Jordan Times.

He said his team — sponsored by Aramex — was now

looking for a training camp in Saudi Arabia after efforts to hold one in Lebanon or Iraq could not come through.

The team includes five national team players including Husam Lutfi, Ma'an Odeh and Naser Alawneh.

Al Jazireh won the Kingdom's basketball crown in 1997 leaving traditional rivals Al Ahli in second place and Al Orthodoxy third.

Al Orthodoxy had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989. Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 while Al Orthodoxy came back to win in 1995 and 1996 and are currently preparing to get back the title.

On the sidelines of preparations for the qualifiers, the Jordan Basketball Federation invited representatives from the seven West Asia zone countries for a meeting to discuss the possible formation of a federation in the area.

With only representatives from Lebanon, Iran and Jordan attending, it was announced that the three representatives attending would form the nucleus with Jordan taking the presidency, Iran the vice-presidency and Lebanon the secretary.

According to the new Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) by-laws, the West Asia Zone will have three representatives in the ABC board instead of a co-ordinator from the area.

However, it was clear if the ABC would endorse the three as board members, taking into account that four of the seven countries did not attend the meeting.

Bulls impressive in 101-91 win over Sonics

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Jordan scored 40 points as the Chicago Bulls re-established themselves as the class of the NBA by defeating the Seattle SuperSonics 101-91 Tuesday night.

Dennis Rodman had 17 rebounds for the Bulls, who won their 15th consecutive home game. Gary Payton scored 22 points and Vin Baker 21 for Seattle, which has its first two-game losing streak this season.

In winning for the 14th time in 16 games, the two-time defending champion Bulls toyed with the team that has the league's best record. Although Chicago (26-11) is three games behind Seattle (29-8) in the overall standings, the Bulls provided evidence that they'll be the team to beat come playoff time.

• **Magic 98, Nuggets 84:** At Denver, The Nuggets lost their team-record 17th straight game as Horace Grant had 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Orlando Magic.

Denver dropped to 2-32 and has not won since Nov. 28.

Mark Price had 15 points and was 3-for-3 on 3-point shots as the Magic won for the fourth time in 11 games. Laphonso Ellis scored 16 and Dean Garrett had a season-high 15 for Denver.

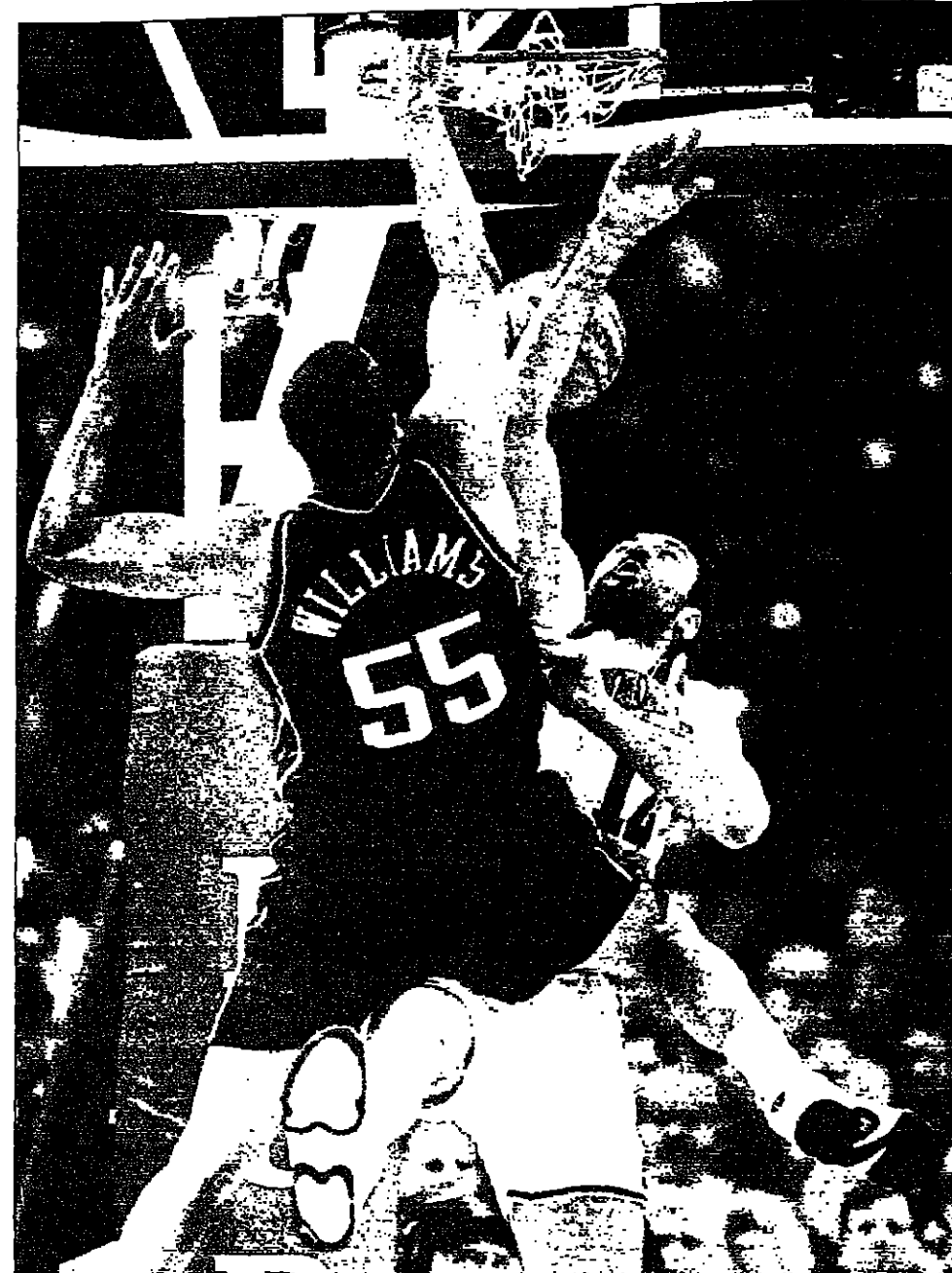
• **Cavaliers 102, Suns 84:** At Phoenix, Derek Anderson scored 10 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter, including six in 63 seconds, as the Cleveland Cavaliers snapped their three-game losing streak with a win over the Phoenix Suns.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas had 23 points and 16 rebounds for Cleveland, but just two in the final period, when Anderson picked up the slack.

George McCloud got the suns within 86-79 with a three-point play with 4:51 left in the game. But in the next 1:03, Anderson darted across the lane for a jumper and made four free throws to open a 92-79 lead.

• **Hawks 91, Knicks 89:** At New York, Steve Smith put on a jump-shooting exhibition, scoring 35 points and making a running 10-footer with 2.6 seconds left to lead the Atlanta Hawks past the New York Knicks.

Smith scored 25 of his points in the second half and shot 14-for-22 overall. The Knicks' Shaquille O'Neal had 23 points and Bryant Reeves had 21 points and 10 rebounds for the



New Jersey Nets' forward Jayson Williams dunks over the defense of Charlotte Hornets' center Vladi Divac during first half NBA action in the Charlotte Coliseum (Reuters photo)

despite taking almost nothing but jumpers, he scored the game-winner after taking an inbounds pass near midcourt, drawing a double-team and leaning between defenders John Starks and Chris Mills for the off-balance shot.

Eldridge Recasner, filling in for injured Mookie Blaylock, added 21 points — two shy of his career-high — and Christian Laettner had 16 as Atlanta won its fourth straight, following a seven-game losing streak.

• **76ers 107, Grizzlies 89:** At Philadelphia, rookie Tim Thomas scored a season-high 23 points and the Philadelphia 76ers handed the Vancouver Grizzlies their 11th straight loss.

In addition to Thomas, Theo Ratliff had 18 points and five blocks and Allen Iverson had 17 points and 10 assists. Jim Jackson added 15 points and Derrick Coleman had 13 points and 10 rebounds for the 76ers.

The 18-point win was the 76ers' largest in their two seasons at the corestates centre, and also their largest margin this season.

Shaquille O'Neal had 23 points and Bryant Reeves had 21 points and 10 rebounds for the

Grizzlies.

• **Spurs 97, Celtics 88:** At Boston, David Robinson had 36 points and 11 rebounds and the San Antonio Spurs pulled away in the last 3 minutes to beat the Boston Celtics 97-88 for their 14th win in 16 games.

The Celtics lost their fifth in a row, matching their worst streak of the season. For the fourth straight game, Boston never led.

The Celtics were led by rookie Chauncey Billups' season-high 26 points and Antoine Walker's 17 points and 14 rebounds.

• **Nets 81, Hornets 68:** At Charlotte, North Carolina, Kendall Gill scored 15 of his 19 points during a decisive second-period spurt and the New Jersey Nets survived a late Charlotte rally.

Jayson Williams and Sherman Douglas led the Nets with 23 points each.

Anthony Mason led the Hornets with 15 points, followed by Travis Williams and B.J. Armstrong with 11 each. The nets held Charlotte's leading scorer, Glen Rice, to 10 points on 3-of-17 shooting.

• **Rockets 100, Mavericks 87:** At Houston, Kevin Willis scored 14 of his 30 points in a comeback

third quarter as the Houston Rockets snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over the Dallas Mavericks.

The Mavericks have lost 18 of their last 19 games, their only win in that span came against Denver, which has the NBA's worst record.

• **Heat 76, Trail Blazers 68:** At Portland, Oregon, Miami's defence held Portland to its lowest point total ever, and the Heat used Jamal Mashburn's 18 points to beat the Trail Blazers.

The Blazers made a franchise-low 22 field goals — in 68 attempts — only three more than the NBA record, two of the field goals came in the final half-minute.

Portland, which shot 4-for-17 and had five turnovers in the fourth quarter, lost its fifth in a row and third straight at home. The 68 points broke the team record for fewest points set Jan. 2 in a 85-69 loss at San Antonio.

The Heat won even though they shot 2-for-19 in the fourth quarter. Alonzo Mourning was 1-for-8 shooting for two points in 17 foul-plagued minutes. Portland also outscored Miami 22-11 from the foul line.

Sampras, Rusedski upset in Open warmup

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Top Australian Open seeds Pete Sampras and Greg Rusedski suffered defeats Wednesday that served as warnings that they will not get things their own way at next week's Grand Slam event.

In the swirling winds of the Kooyong Classic, No. 1 seed Sampras lost to French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. Britain's Rusedski, No. 5 seed, went down to Australian hard hitter Mark Philippoussis 7-5, 6-4.

The two losers will now play each other on Thursday, the second day of the exhibition event that has become the traditional lead in event to the Open.

"It was not meant for playing tennis out there, it was more for flying a kite," Sampras said. "It was impossible to play the wind was so strong."

The 21-year-old Kuerten, who has risen to 14th in the world since his surprise French Open win last June, was overjoyed with his win in his first meeting with Sampras.

"It always gives me a bit of confidence and a good feeling to get a win like that. He is a tough player

Stomach injury halts Chang's Open preparations

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Michael Chang pulled out of the Kooyong Classic tennis tournament Wednesday because of what organisers called a "slight" stomach injury.

The World No. 3, who has won the classic for the past three years, said he was "hopeful" that despite the injury he would resume preparations for next week's Australian Open on Thursday.

Chang arrived last weekend and has been training on the Melbourne Park courts for the first Grand Slam of the year. His place in the Kooyong Classic has been taken by Russia's Andrei Medvedev.

to beat, even in practice. "The level was so close that either of us could have won," said Kuerten. "In the second set I was playing better shots. I relaxed, gained in confidence and took five or six games in a row."

Rusedski was also relaxed about his defeat to his fellow big server. "I am not at all disappointed," said the British number one.

"I think he got to 209kph and I made 211kph. It was difficult for both of us to serve at pace in those conditions."

"I think we were quite even. But it was ideal practice for the Australian Open. The courts are the same the balls are virtual-

ly the same."

Earlier on the first day of the event, Andre Agassi, seeking to fight his way back into the world top 100, beat Austrian Thomas Muster 6-4, 6-0.

Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia, who says his aim in 1998 is to get back into the world top 10, beat Ukraine's Andrei Medvedev 7-6 (7/5), 6-3. Medvedev stepped into the exhibition tournament after defending champion Michael Chang pulled out with a strained stomach muscle.

The tournament is being played in two groups of four with top player from each group going into Saturday's final.

Tomba faces tax probe

BOLOGNA (AFP) — State prosecutors here are expected to ask for more time in a continuing probe into the tax affairs of Italian ski idol Alberto Tomba and his family, it emerged on Tuesday.

Investigators suspect that a total of 23 billion lira (\$13 million) has been hidden from Italy's tax authorities over a six-year period, ANSA news agency reported.

Along with the triple Olympic champion, his father Franco, mother Maria Grazia and sister Alessia are among 15 people cited by the enquiry, which was originally due to end next week.

However, prosecutors have yet to finish their interviews with potential witnesses and suspects, and are still waiting to receive and/or examine documents they have requested from abroad — in Britain, Switzerland, France, Germany, the United States, Japan and Austria.

Thirteen of those cited in the enquiry are suspected of complicity in tax fraud, two are suspected of issuing false invoices (Tomba's ex-manager Paolo Comellini and Luciano Bindini, the owner of an advertising agency) and one, former tax investigator Giuseppe Moscuza, is suspected of leaking details of the enquiry at various stages to the Tomba family.

Kournikova out of Sydney International

SYDNEY (AFP) — American Lindsay Davenport tossed glamour player Anna Kournikova out of the Sydney International here Wednesday in a gruelling rain-delayed match that proved too much for the Russian teenager.

Kournikova, 16, fought hard in the second set but lost form amid constant interruptions as the hot and humid conditions turned to drizzle and the game dragged out over six hours.

The bored crowd was clearly on the teenager's side, in scenes Davenport said were reminiscent of Gabriela Sabatini's heyday.

"It's like when we used to play Gabi. The crowd was always for Gabi, wherever you were," she said, adding that she was pleased to be

out of the limelight.

Kournikova's off-court antics were splashed in the newspapers again Wednesday after she paid a visit to the Australian cricket team.

Even the respected broadsheet The Australian could not resist a picture of her clad in a short dress revealing her athletic legs as star bowler Shane Warne helped her over a fence and into the team's dressing room.

The stunning teenager said she was thoroughly enjoying herself in Sydney, but rated Wednesday's conditions as the worst she had experienced.

"She definitely has more experience in these sorts of matches," she said of Davenport.

She complained bitterly

about the WTA rules that restrict the number of tournaments she is allowed to play.

"You can go crazy practising for two months, every day," the 30th-ranked player said, adding that more match play would have put her in the top ten by now.

But although experience won out here Wednesday, Davenport said the new vanguard of teen stars who have shone here this week could not be taken lightly.

"There's a lot more depth in women's tennis. Besides the new faces like the Williams sisters and Kournikova, some of the old players are playing well again too."

Davenport goes on to play Serena Williams, who made the quarter-finals after

France's Sandrine Testud withdrew with tendonitis.

Williams, another 16-year-old, said her game was improving but still showed some inconsistencies.

"I wasn't playing my best today. It was hot out there and I was tired," she said. Serena and her older sister Venus, 17, had a thrilling day here Tuesday with identical scorecard victories that saw the elder Williams topple world number one Martina Hingis.

The ambitious pair said this week they plan to sit atop the tennis world at No. 1 and two seeds.

In other play, Australia's teenage sensation Lleyton Hewitt who defeated second seed Jonas Bjorkmann Tuesday, was downed by compatriot Michael Tebbutt.

Spanish seventh seed Albert Costa scored a comeback win over Germany's Hendrik Dreckmann to advance to the quarter-finals.

Costa looked set to become the sixth men's seed to bow out of the tournament after he lost the first set and trailed in the second, but he managed to get back in the game and triumph 3-6 6-4 6-3.

U.S. Open champion Patrick Rafter of Australia and defending champion Tim Henman of Britain are the only other seeds left in the draw.

Karol Kucera also advanced to the last eight Wednesday when his German opponent Nicolas Kiefer retired with the flu with the Slovakian leading 5-2 in the first set.

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Murdoch and CBS sign \$4 billion-NFL deals

NEW YORK (AFP) — Australian-born media magnate Rupert Murdoch and CBS, the television network he outbid for American football rights four years ago, will share the broadcasts over the next eight seasons.

And both will pay dearly for the task, with Murdoch's Fox spending \$4.5 billion to keep its games while CBS spent \$4 billion to purchase away the rights package previously held by NBC.

NBC, which spent nearly \$2 billion in November to keep National Basketball Association rights, also lost out to ABC and cable network ESPN in trying to buy away other NFL packages.

ABC kept its Monday Night Football package and ESPN was made the exclusive cable broadcaster, knocking Ted Turner's TNT network out of the NFL cable picture. No firm dollar figures were available for those deals.

All are eight-year deals starting later in 1998. The CBS and Fox deals allow the NFL to reopen for better terms in 2003. Ratings dipped for NFL games this season but NFL owners could profit from future gains.

"This reopening option would enable the NFL clubs to benefit from future positive changes in marketplace conditions, ratings, audience demographics, changes in technology and other factors," NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue said.

NFL clubs made a combined \$4.38 billion over the past four years from TV rights deals.

Fox will have three Super Bowls in the deal, the first in 1999. ABC will also have three, the first in 2000. CBS will broadcast only two.

At \$500 million a year, CBS will pay 130

per cent more than NBC did in its expiring American Conference deal. The National Conference rates are a 39 per cent rise for Fox.

Of 14 stations owned and operated by CBS, 12 are in AFC markets. Losing the NFL in the previous bidding led to several stations dropping CBS for Fox, helping boost the value of Murdoch's network, which also owns US baseball and hockey television rights.

CBS Sports president Sean McManus said he expects the deal to be profitable despite the vast sums involved. That means high advertising costs for sponsors and likely even higher product and service prices for the viewers.

"We will not lose money on this deal," McManus said. "This has tremendous value for our television stations and tremendous value to our affiliates and the network."

ABC, owned by the Walt Disney Company entertainment giant, kept the Monday package it helped create in 1970 and held for the past four years for \$230 million a year.

NBC, owned by General Electric, had shown American pro football games since 1965 and was already reeling with May's impending finish of top-rated U.S. comedy show "Seinfeld."

NBC's final NFL telecast for eight seasons will be the January 25 Super Bowl in San Diego between reigning champion Green Bay and Denver.

NBC has secured U.S. rights to the five Olympic Games after next month's Games in Nagano, Japan, ensuring they will have the big-money multi-sport shows from Sydney, Athens, Salt Lake City and two underwritten sites.

Chinese swimmer banned as new drug scandal revealed

PERTH (AFP) — Continued Chinese participation in the World Swimming Championships was in doubt here late Wednesday following yet another mass positive dope test of their swimmers.

On a night when Russian great Alex Popov triumphantly claimed his second world 100m crown, a statement released towards the end of the program by world swimming federation FINA dropped a bombshell.

Three women swimmers — Luna Wang, Cai Huijue, Zhang Yi — and men's swimmer Wang Wei — tested positive on January eight for the banned substance Triamterene, a diuretic.

The quartet have performed well below their best times at the world championship, but they have now been banned from the meet and their immediate future hinges on confirmation of the B sample from the test.

Their suspension came with the news that their teammate Yuan Yuan and her coach Zhou Zhewen were given lengthy bans from swimming arising from the Australian



Chinese swimmer Zhang Yi prepares for a training session in Perth. FINA announced that Zhang tested positive for the banned substance Triamterene at the World Swimming Championships in Perth January 14. Zhang and three teammates who also tested positive have been suspended (Reuters photo)

Customs' discovery of prohibited vials of human growth hormones in Yuan's baggage at Sydney Airport en route to Perth last Thursday, the same day as the latest positive drug tests.

Yuan was banned from swimming for four years and Zhou faces a period of 15 years out of the sport, with a FINA panel considering an appeal after 10 years

of the suspension has passed. The capture of the four Chinese drug cheats takes to 27 swimmers the number of positive drug tests China has had this decade.

The latest upheaval in swimming provoked anger among swimmers and coaches.

Australian head coach Don Talbot was scathing in

his criticism calling on FINA to ban the Chinese team from the remainder of the championship and any medals already won by their swimmers to be returned.

"We all know that and all we are doing is proving that there is something rotten going on and FINA have found that out now and are taking their steps towards to do it," Talbot said.

"FINA have a rule that says four strikes out and I personally feel that the Chinese should not be able to compete further in this meet."

Nine-times U.S. Olympic gold medalist Mark Spitz, joined in with Talbot, telling reporters: "I think it's pretty predictable. FINA made the (four strikes) rule, they must enforce it. It's up to them now to show what is below their belt."

David Gerrard, a leading sports medicine doctor and a member of FINA's Medical Committee overseeing testing at these championships, said of the latest doping drama: "Diuretics are taken to release fluid, they are not performance-enhancing drugs, but have been included on the IOC's

banned list for health reasons and for their implications in masking steroid use."

Gerrard said there was no sound medical or clinical reason for a healthy athlete to be taking diuretics.

There have been around 400 athletes tested pre-competition at this championship.

Chinese sport has been tainted by drug abuse with seven swimmers among 11 champion athletes returning positive doping tests after the Hiroshima Asian Games in October 1994.

Talbot, a vocal critic of China's sporting regime, said: "History has shown that people have been cheating going back into the 1970's."

"They deny it when they are accused of it and when they have the evidence in their face they still deny it."

"I'm voicing what I believe other people feel. I'm probably the only one stupid enough to say it, but I feel we have waited long enough."

"Athletes in my team, that have busted their arses, have been hurt and I don't like that happening."

SCOREBOARD

Sydney International tennis tournament

Serena Williams (USA) bt Sandrine Testud (Fra) 7-6 (7-5) 3-0 retired
Lindsay Davenport (USA x2) bt Anna Kournikova (Rus) 6-2 6-7 (4-7) 6-3
Michael Tebbutt (Aus) bt Lleyton Hewitt (Aus) 5-7 6-3 7-5
Nastasha Zvereva (Blr) Amanda Coetzer (Rsa x3)
Ai Sugiyama (Jpn) bt Conchita Martinez (Esp x6) 7-6 (7-0) 6-3
Tim Henman (Gbr x6) bt Mark Woodforde (Aus) 6-2 3-6 6-4
Albert Costa (Spa x7) bt Magnus Gustafsson (Swe) 3-6 6-4 6-3
Karol Kuchera (Slo) bt Nicolas Kiefer (Ger) 5-2 retired
Patrick Rafter (Aus x1) bt Alberto Berasategui (Esp) 6-3, 6-4

Kooyong Classic

Group 1
Gustavo Kuerten (Bra) bt Pete Sampras (USA) 3-6, 6-3, 6-4
Mark Philippoussis (Aus) bt Greg Rusedski (Gbr) 7-5, 6-4
Group 2
Andre Agassi (USA) bt Thomas Muster (Aut) 6-4, 6-0
Goran Ivanisevic (Cro) bt Andrei Medvedev (Ukr) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3

Spanish Cup (First leg)

Alaves 1 Real Madrid 0

English FA Cup (3rd round)

Bournemouth 0 Huddersfield 1
Cheltenham 1 Reading 1
Hereford 0 Tranmere 3
Peterborough 0 Walsall 2
West Brom 3 Stoke 1
3rd round replays
Bury 1 Sheffield United 2
Ipswich 1 Bristol Rovers 0
Middlesbrough 2 Q. Park Rangers 0
Wrexham 2 Wimbledon 3

NBA

San Antonio 97 Boston 88
New Jersey 81 Charlotte 68
Atlanta 91 New York 89
Philadelphia 107 Vancouver 89
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Houston 100 Dallas 87
Orlando 98 Denver 84
Cleveland 102 Phoenix 84
Miami 76 Portland 68

NHL

Washington 4 Ottawa 0

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Popov ends Klim's golden run at the world championships

PERTH (AFP) — Russian great Alexander Popov repulsed another attack on his sprint crown by holding off his Australian training partner and rival Michael Klim to secure his second world 100 metre freestyle title here Wednesday.

The 26-year-old sprinting marvel broke his championship record time with a splash and dash in 48.93 seconds, outside his world record 48.21 secs, but smashing Matt Biondi's championship record time of 48.94secs, set in Madrid in 1986.

"It's good for our coach Gennadi Touretski," said Popov after his latest triumph. "It basically says he is the best coach in the world."

"After the race I said to Michael Klim I think I lost half a second in the last 10 metres."

"I couldn't feel anything in my body any more. Klim, who trains with Popov under mutual coach Gennadi Touretski at the

Australian Sports Institute in Canberra, acknowledged the greatness of Popov.

"It's his event and he really deserves it," said the 20-year-old Australian. "I might have to wait for the next generation."

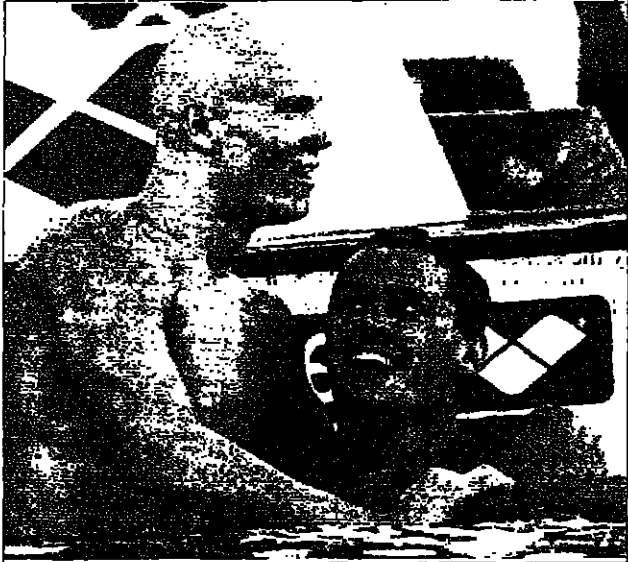
Klim was shooting for his third gold medal in three swims at the meet having won the 200m freestyle gold on Monday's opening night and leading off the Australian team in the 200m freestyle relay on Tuesday.

Sweden's Lars Frolander was third in the 100m in 49.53secs.

Popov went into the final as the second fastest qualifier after Klim had clocked 49.33 secs to Popov's 49.57secs in winning his heat earlier Wednesday.

But Popov, who beat American Gary Hall for the world 100m title at the 1994 Rome World Championship in 49.12secs, took charge from the start and led throughout, turning in 23.56secs.

Popov is now a double



Russia's Alexander Popov is congratulated by Australia's Michael Klim (L) at the 8th World Swimming Championships in Perth. Popov has not been defeated in this event since 1991 (Reuters photo)

Olympic and world 100m freestyle champion and undisputedly the fastest man in water.

It was Russia's first gold medal in the pool at the world championships, although Popov will be

again the one to beat in the 50 metres freestyle later in the meet.

Earlier, China's Chen Yan beat American Brooke Bennett for the women's 400 metre freestyle gold medal.

Chen ended a series of poor swims by the Chinese over the last two days to give her team a massive confidence boost and her second title at the championships with a close victory over Bennett.

Chen swam a time of four minutes 06.72 seconds to beat the Olympic 800m freestyle champion by 35-hundredths of a second.

Germany's Dagmar Hase, the Olympic 400m freestyle silver medalist, was third in 4:08.82.

American Lea Maurer survived a late drive by Japan's Mai Nakamura to win the women's 100 metres backstroke final.

The 26-year-old former Lea Loveless swam one minute 01.16 seconds to just hold off Nakamura, the 1997 Pan Pacific Games champion, by 12-hundredths of a second. Nakamura's time was 1:01.28.

German Sandra Volker, who was second to the turn behind Maurer, got the

bronze medal in a time of 1:01.47.

Ukraine's Denis Silantiev beat Frenchman Frank Esposito by 16-100ths of a second to win the men's 200 metres butterfly world title in a desperate finish.

Esposito, who bettered the best 1997 time in the heats, was overhauled by the 27-year-old Silantiev in the last 30 metres.

Silantiev won the gold medal in one minute 56.61 seconds, out-touching the Frenchman, who hit the wall in 1:56.77. American Tom Malchow was third in 1:57.26.

The United States, anchored by world 100m champion Jenny Thompson, surged home to win the women's 100 metres freestyle relay final in the day's last event.

The U.S. beat the German team home in a time of three minutes 42.11 seconds. Germany grabbed silver in 3:43.11 with Australia taking the bronze medal in 3:43.71.

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One million Egyptians appeal for end to U.N. embargo on Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — A million Egyptians have exhorted the United Nations to lift the embargo on Iraq, branding it a "weapon of mass destruction" that has claimed hundreds of thousands of children among its victims.

"The embargo is illegal. It is a duty to lift it as soon as possible," thousands chanted in unison at a rally late Tuesday attended by a senior Egyptian government official, professional union members, human rights activists and intellectuals.

The rally sponsored by the Egyptian journalists' union met late into the night at the Cairo stadium to announce the results of a one-million-signature pro-Iraq petition.

The petition, which says the "economic embargo is a weapon of mass

destruction," will be handed over to representatives of the United Nations and the Cairo-based Arab League.

The petition was launched in November in Egypt alongside a similar campaign in other Arab countries and the United States, according to Soheir Al Soqqari, an Egyptian-American feminist who spearheaded the campaign.

A minute's silence was observed for the more than 1.5 million people in Iraq, including 700,000 children, who have died as a result of the embargo, according to figures supplied by organisers.

A symbolic funeral procession, during which the coffin of an "unknown Iraqi child" was carried, wound through the stadium.

"This is a historic day. This rally confirms that Egypt stands alongside the

Iraqi people and children," said Abdul Moneim Emara, executive director of Egypt's higher council of youths and sports.

Journalists' union chief Makram Mohammad Ahmad said the petition had essentially a "humanitarian aspect because the injustice done to Iraq's children is flagrant."

"Embargoes are unfair," Mr. Ahmad said, adding that the signatures were also aimed at putting pressure on the United Nations to lift another embargo on Libya.

Seyyed Rashed, head of the Egyptian workers' union, said that the 17-million-strong union members would add their names to the petition.

The president of the Arab Organisation of Human Rights Mohammad Faek said the petition "expresses the anger of millions of

Arabs over the deaths of Iraqi children... and American and international double standards in dealing with regional issues."

Meanwhile a message from former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark charged that the sanctions on Iraq "violate the Genocide Convention... [and] as such the sanctions are a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter."

The United Nations slapped a trade and oil embargo on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Two years later it imposed an air and military embargo on Libya for its refusal to hand over to the West two Libyans suspected of involvement in the bombing of the 1988 bombing of a plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people were killed.

Iraq requests part of income allocated for pilgrimage

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq sought permission from the United Nations Wednesday to spend \$50 million of its oil-for-food income to pay for Iraqi Muslims to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in April.

"Because of the embargo depriving them of their resources, Iraqis are not managing to observe their religious duties," said Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf in a message to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Mr. Sahhaf asked for permission to take the money from the \$1.3 billion it is expected to earn over the six months to June from the limited oil sales approved by the United Nations under the oil-for-food deal, the official news agency INA reported.

To fund last year's pilgrimage, Iraq asked the United Nations to unblock \$50 million of its assets frozen abroad since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, but the U.N. Sanctions Committee turned down the request in a move Iraq blamed on British and U.S. representa-

tives. Under a quota system which Saudi Arabia operates for the annual pilgrimage, Iraq is authorised to send up to 22,000 pilgrims a year to Mecca, but it has decided to send just 3,000 this year. Last year it sent only 1,000.

Iraqi theologians decreed in 1995 that Iraqis were excused from performing the pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, because of the economic crisis brought about by U.N. sanctions.

Arab tourism ministers pledge to help revive tourism in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab tourism ministers pledged Wednesday that 1998 will be the year of Arab tourism in Egypt, devastated after the massacre of 58 Western and Asian holidaymakers by Islamists in November.

In Luxor, site of the massacre which also claimed four Egyptian lives, the Arab Parliamentary Union meanwhile held an emergency meeting of solidarity with Egypt to discuss ways of fighting terrorism.

The tourism ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Sudan, Libya, Lebanon and Yemen gathered at the Cairo headquarters of the Arab League for a two-day conference dubbed "1998: Year of Arab Tourism in Egypt."

Representatives of several other Arab countries attended the meeting and pledged to begin sending tour groups to Egypt, while industry experts were expected to chart a tourism rescue operation for the land of the Pharaohs.

Tourism Minister Aki Baltaji, who called for the meeting, said "inter-Arab tourism should be encouraged because it is the only guarantee to reduce the negative effects that harm the industry."

Egypt has been reeling from the economic fallout of the Luxor attack and its lucrative tourism industry, the country's major source of foreign currency, will lose as much as \$1 billion because international tour operators cancelled Egypt from their itineraries, experts said.

More than four million tourists were expected to visit Egypt in 1997 with Germans, Italians, Britons, Israelis and French in the first five ranks and Saudis in sixth position with Palestinians and Libyans close behind.

"Arab tourism to Egypt represents more than 30 per cent of overall tourism and is very important because Arab visitors spend the most and stay the longest," Egyptian Tourism Minister Mamdub Al Beltagi told the gathering.

Yemeni Tourism Minister Abdelmalek Mansur said his country will organise tours to Egypt very soon and his Sudanese counterpart Mohammad Tahi Eila made a similar pledge.

Bahraini minister for cabinet affairs, Mohammad Ibrahim Motawa, said Manama was sending experts to Cairo next month to map out a project to bolster tourism to Egypt.

Mr. Motawa also urged Arab countries to ratify an agreement to cooperate against terrorism as a step to help tourism development in the region.



A WARM HUG IN MINNESOTA: Craig Wagner gets a hug from his white Bengal Tiger, Taari, Thursday Jan. 8 (released today), at his home in Forest Lake. The 20-month-old, 450 pound tiger will eventually grow to about 550 pounds. For almost two years Wagner has kept 15 big cats on his property and neighbours in the area are upset. The animals are kept in cages inside a compound encircled by a 10-foot-high fence topped by electric wires (AP Photo)

Asian stock markets soar on optimism of regional financial recovery

HONG KONG (AFP) — Asian stock markets soared Wednesday, extending their gains amid optimistic comments by visiting IMF and U.S. officials that economic reform will kick-start a regional recovery.

Markets across the region took heart from the upbeat comments by International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Michel Camdessus and U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers.

Stable regional currencies shored up sentiment, along with the second consecutive gain on a resilient Wall Street.

Mr. Camdessus in Singapore stressed that he wanted Indonesia — whose perceived back-peddling on reforms has affected financial markets — to undertake a "dramatic acceleration" of long overdue structural reforms.

And in Bangkok, Mr. Summers said the United States had "a very great stake in the prosperity of Asia," calling the region a "critical foreign policy priority for the U.S."

In Tokyo, Japanese share prices rose 2.5 per cent, with market sentiment buoyed by the extended rebound on Asian markets.

The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 leading issues rose 366.04 points to finish at 15,121.98.

"Asia's share markets appear to have pulled out of their bottomless slide, and excessive pessimism has receded slightly," one broker said.

The market was also bolstered by news that the IMF and China will discuss measures to prevent a further spread of the crisis in Asia, brokers said.

In Hong Kong, share prices closed the morning session 6.0 per cent higher as interbank offered rates eased.

The key Hang Seng Index put on 523.20 points, or 6.0 per cent, to close the morning session at 9,243.20, after having added 598.94

points in the previous day's trading for the year's first gain.

In Singapore, blue chip share prices rose 7.4 per cent in morning session, with the Straits Times Industrials rising 85.46 points to 1,341.98.

"The market has come down so much in the past few days, a correction is not unreasonable, plus you have

and currency rebounded sharply amid optimism over the outcome of a visit by U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers.

The Stock Exchange of Thailand broad-based index rose 3.6 per cent to 361.64 points, a gain of 12.68 points during morning trade.

In Manila, share prices closed 6.0 per cent higher due to the strengthening of the local currency and continued bargain-hunting. The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 95.23 points to close at 1,686.22 points.

Ellin Salvatierra, analyst of Anscor-Hagedorn Securities Inc. said that the index was up "mainly because of the strengthening of the peso" and because "foreign investors are just trying to pick up the issues at bargain levels."

Australian shares rose 1.5 per cent after strong gains on Wall Street and in Asia combined with improved gold prices to boost confidence.

The Australian Stock Exchange's key barometer, the All Ordinaries Index, rose 40 points to close at 2,605.3.

In Taipei, stocks soared 3.8 per cent, led by strong buying of technology issues, on the back of an overnight rise on Wall Street and Hong Kong's continued rally. The Taiwan Stock Exchange weighted price index rallied 285.01 points to 7,798.25.

"Investors jumped in to buy shares, convinced that the world stock markets have recovered from the recent bearish sentiment," said Andy Wei of MasterLink Securities Investment and Trust Co. Ltd. in Taipei.

In Seoul, share prices closed 2.5 per cent higher, as persistent foreign buying which discouraged local investors' attempts at profit-taking.



Spice Girls described as 'beauties trapped in fashion waste'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Britain's pop super-group the Spice Girls were number one on Mr. Blackwell's worst dressed list of 1997, judged "the only spices on the planet that have no taste." The 38th annual fashion blacklist described the popular girl group as "five candy-coloured beauties trapped in fashion waste." Other stars chosen by the city's fashion arbiter were Madonna, former "Baywatch" babe Pamela Anderson Lee, Jennifer Tilly, Sigourney Weaver and British actress Emma Thompson. Blackwell also cited some unexpected stars as well dressed — grunge singer-turned actress Courtney Love, actress Demi Moore, Tom Cruise's wife Nicole Kidman and Mexican actress Salma Hayek.

Estefan takes stand in 'Battle of the Bongos' trial

MIAMI (AP) — Singer Gloria Estefan took the witness stand to testify in the "Battle of the Bongos." The California manufacturer of Bongo Jeans is suing Mrs. Estefan and her husband Emilio for alleged trademark infringement over their Disney World restaurant — Bongos Cuban Cafe. The clothing maker wants them to change the name. The Estefans are just as determined to keep the name after investing \$5 million in the restaurant styled after 1940s Havana eateries.

Gibson to shoot new 'Lethal Weapon' film

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Mel Gibson is to begin shooting for the fourth film in the "Lethal Weapon" series on Friday. He will team up again with previous co-stars Renee Russo, Danny Glover and Joe Pesci. According to the Los Angeles Times, two new actors will be joining the hit film series, comedian Chris Rock and Chinese actor Jet Li.

Stallone raises \$200,000 for charity through T-shirt sale

BEVERLY HILLS (AFP) — Sylvester Stallone has donated \$200,000 to a foundation which treats children born with congenital heart problems, after his daughter was born with a hole in her heart. He raised the money through the sale of a T-shirt which he designed and sold across the world in the Planet Hollywood chain of theme restaurants. The movie star is one of Planet Hollywood's joint owners. The cheque was given to Dr. Hillel Laks, who successfully operated on Stallone's daughter Sophia Rose in November 1996, two months after her birth.

Ted Turner is America's most generous man

NEW YORK (AFP) — CNN founder and nature enthusiast Ted Turner has earned a new label: America's most generous man, says Fortune magazine. Turner was first in Fortune's 1997 list of the most generous Americans with an announcement last year of his billion-dollar gift to the United Nations. Second and third on America's most-generous list are Kathryn Albertson, widow of the founder of the Albertson's department store, who donated \$660 million, and financier George Soros, who donated \$540. Microsoft head Bill Gates placed fourth with \$210 million in gifts. Americans must have donated at least \$12 million in 1997 to make the 40-most-generous donor list.

Sheikha Fatima gives Garaudy \$50,000 'in support of thinker'

DUBAI (AFP) — The wife of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) president has made a gift of \$50,000 to French writer Roger Garaudy, who is on trial in Paris for denying the existence of Nazi gas chambers, the official press here reported.

Sheikha Fatima Bent Mubarak, wife of Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, made the gift "in support of the French Muslim thinker Roger Garaudy," according to the press.

In Qatar, the House of Youth in Doha on Monday organised a rally in support of Mr.

Garaudy, the official Qatari news agency QNA reported Wednesday.

Mr. Garaudy, speaking to the rally from via satellite from France said that "the Zionists are annoyed" by his book which "reviewed their strategy aiming at establishing a greater Israel by chipping away at the countries of the region."

Mr. Garaudy, 84, a convert to Islam, went on trial last week in France for questioning crimes against humanity in his 1996 book "Les Mythes Fondamentaux de la Politique Israelienne" (Founding Myths

of Israeli Politics), which denies the existence of Nazi gas chambers for the extermination of the Jews.

Such remarks are illegal under a French law against neo-Nazi activities.

Mr. Garaudy said the extermination of six million Jews during World War II by the Nazis was a "myth" used to justify "everything Israel has demanded and obtained in Palestine."

If convicted, Mr. Garaudy could face a one-year jail term and a 300,000 French franc (\$50,000) fine.

British foreign minister seeks to avert EU-U.S. trade war on Iran

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook will leave for Washington Wednesday seeking to avert a trade war between Europe and the United States over Iran, calling for a normalisation of trade with the Islamist regime.

Meeting Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Thursday, Mr. Cook, representing the European Union (EU), will urge the United States to recognise the "new mood" in Iran since the election of President Mohammad Khatami, his spokesman told reporters.

Europe is in favour of a common policy on Iran for Europe and the United States and favours "normal trade," with constraints only on the export of strategic goods to Iran, Mr. Cook will say, the spokesman said.

"We are trying to achieve a convergence between the EU and the U.S. on Iran... This is part of long-running efforts to broker a solution to our differences of opinion (on Iran) and avoid a transatlantic dispute," he added.

The Europeans "do not think it is realistic that the U.S. will immediately start trading with Iran" but the foreign secretary will urge "flexibility" in applying U.S. legislation punishing even foreign firms that invest

more than \$40 million a year in the Iranian or Libyan oil sectors.

U.S. officials had indicated that a commitment to promote greater cooperation on counter-terrorism and restrict exports that could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction could placate Congress into relaxing application of the act, the British official said.

"The U.S. are looking for more help from the EU on WMD (weapons of mass destruction) and counter-terrorism and we in turn are looking for the U.S. to show more flexibility on sanctions," he said.

"We believe it is important to engage the moderate opinion in Iran. Neither sanctions and complete isolation nor the old style European Union critical dialogue work. We need to find a new way."

Since his inauguration last August, Mr. Khatami has sought to smooth his country's turbulent relations with the United States, seeking an opening to dialogue between the countries' peoples.

The United States is reviewing its Iran policy and Ms. Albright has until the end of the month to decide whether to impose sanctions against the French oil giant Total and other companies involved in a \$2 billion offshore Iranian gas project.

Europe's own "critical dialogue" with Iran was suspended last year after Tehran was implicated in terrorist killings in a Berlin restaurant but relations have since been improved.

The Foreign Office spokesman stressed Britain's policy of sanctions against Libya would stay in place until Tripoli handed over two Libyans wanted for questioning over the 1988 Lockerbie bombing over Scotland.

He added that Britain believed Iran had an "active programme" to develop nuclear weapons and that London wanted more progress on the fatwa imposed on British author Salman Rushdie in 1989, but nevertheless trade in ordinary goods was "legitimate."

Mr. Cook will fly to Washington late Wednesday with the European Commission's vice president, Sir Leon Brittan.

As well as Ms. Albright, he will also meet the U.S. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, several congressmen and possibly U.S. Vice President Al Gore. On Friday he will travel to Ottawa to meet Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and other officials, before leaving for London in the evening.